

Catholic Family Values

Civil Marriages & Marriage breakdown

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updated 2007

CIVIL MARRIAGES

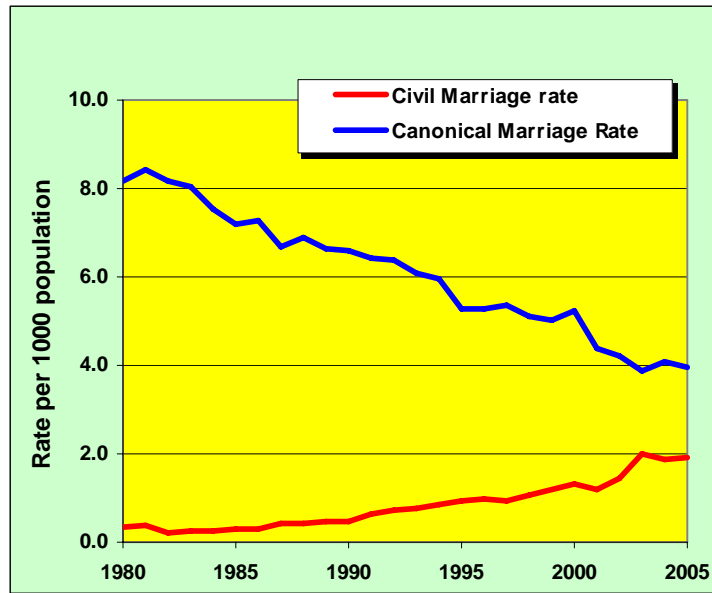
The Crude Marriage rate is decreasing progressively in the Maltese population from the 8.5 per 1000 population figure in 1980 to the 5.9 per 1000 population in 2005. Civil Marriage was introduced in the Maltese Islands by Legal Act No. XXXVII of 1975. There has since been a gradual progressive increase in the Civil Marriage rate in the Maltese Islands from 0.3 per 1000 population in 1980 to 4.0 per 1000 in 2005. Proportionately to Canonical Marriages, Civil Marriages since 1980 have increased progressively by about 30%, with a sharp rise after 1991 [Table 1; Figure 1-2].

Year	Total Marriages	Crude Marriage Rate*	Civil Marriages	Civil Marriage Rate*	Canonical Marriage Rate*	% Civil to Total marriages
1980	2775	8.5	108	0.3	8.2	3.9
1981	2672	8.8	115	0.4	8.4	4.3
1982	2788	8.4	72	0.2	8.2	2.6
1983	2780	8.3	92	0.3	8.0	3.3
1984	2633	7.8	91	0.3	7.5	3.5
1985	2549	7.5	99	0.3	7.2	3.9
1986	2619	7.6	105	0.3	7.3	4.0
1987	2437	7.1	139	0.4	6.7	5.7
1988	2531	7.3	148	0.4	6.9	5.8
1989	2485	7.1	161	0.5	6.6	6.5
1990	2498	7.1	160	0.5	6.6	6.4
1991	2541	7.1	235	0.7	6.4	9.2
1992	2377	7.1	246	0.7	6.4	10.3
1993	2476	6.8	275	0.8	6.1	11.1
1994	2483	6.8	311	0.9	5.9	12.5
1995	2317	6.2	345	0.9	5.3	14.9
1996	2370	6.2	370	1.0	5.3	15.6
1997	2414	6.3	366	1.0	5.4	15.2
1998	2376	6.2	409	1.1	5.1	17.2
1999	2409	6.2	463	1.2	5.0	19.2
2000	2545	6.5	509	1.3	5.2	20.0
2001	2194	5.6	474	1.2	4.4	21.6
2002	2240	5.7	575	1.5	4.2	25.7
2003	2350	5.9	803	2.0	3.9	34.2
2004	2402	6.0	756	1.9	4.1	31.5
2005	2374	5.9	779	1.9	4.0	32.8

Source: National Statistics Office

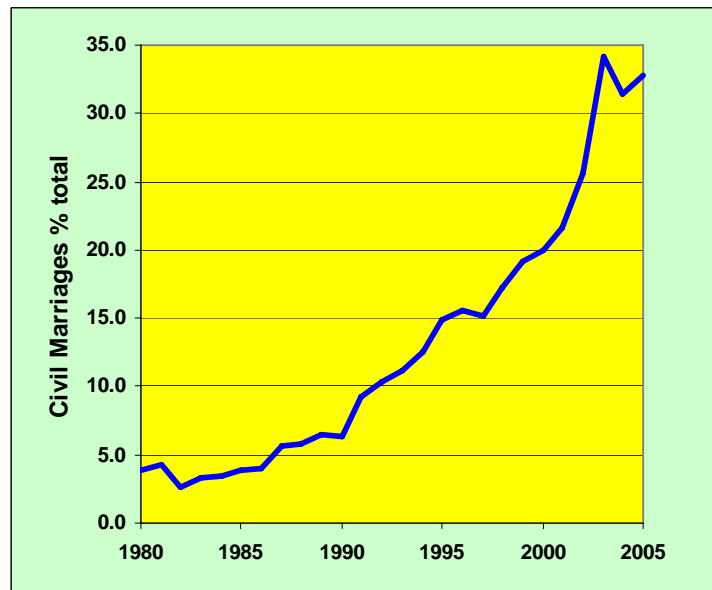
Table 1: Marriage Rates: Maltese Islands 1980-2005

*Rate per 1000 population



Source: National Statistics Office

Figure 1: Marriage Rates: Maltese Islands 1980-2005



Source: National Statistics Office

Figure 2: Civil Marriage: Maltese Islands 1980-2005

While this increase can be noted in all age groups, it appears to have increased at a lesser rate in spouses aged less than 25 years [Table 2].

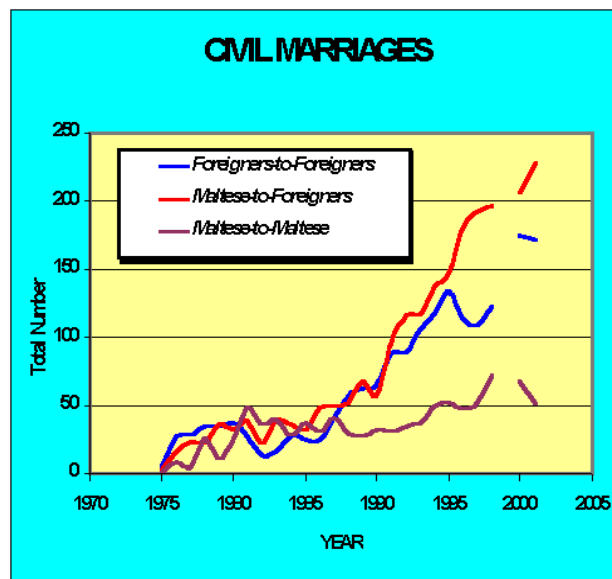
Groom						
Age Group [years]	1980-84		1995-99		2001-05	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
<20	12	2.51	59	3.07	73	2.16
20-24	98	20.50	417	21.68	443	13.08
25-29	85	17.78	509	26.47	766	22.62
30-34	97	20.29	331	17.21	732	21.61
35-39	63	13.18	183	9.52	524	15.47
>40	123	25.73	424	22.05	849	25.07
Total	478	100.00	1923	100.00	3387	100.00

Bride						
Age Group [years]	1980-84		1995-99		2001-05	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
<20	51	10.67	248	12.70	229	6.76
20-24	107	22.38	518	26.52	701	20.70
25-29	94	19.67	436	22.32	856	25.27
30-34	72	15.06	255	13.06	672	19.84
35-39	55	11.51	191	9.78	390	11.51
>40	99	20.71	305	15.62	539	15.91
Total	478	100.00	1953	100.00	3387	100.00

Source: National Statistics Office

Table 2: Civil Marriage - Age distribution of spouses

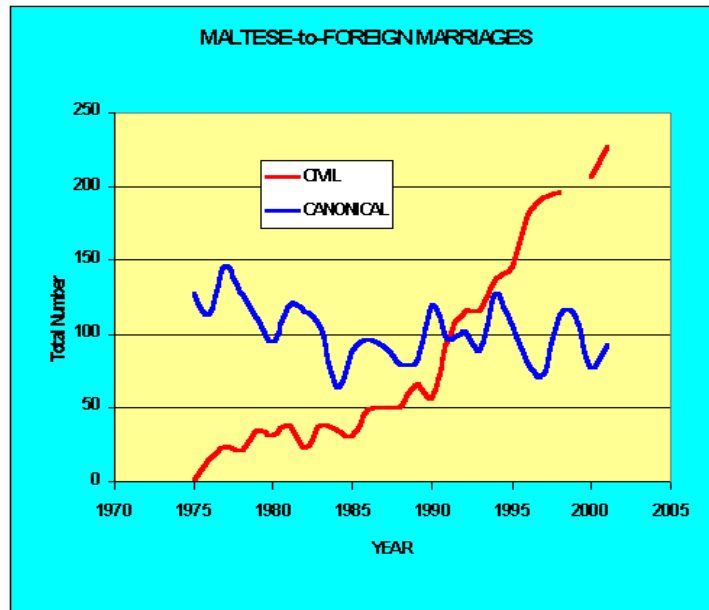
Civil Marriages have increased progressively in all formats since the legislative introduction in 1975. The rise, as expected, has been particularly marked in marriages involving foreigner spouses, though a definite but not marked rise can also be noted in Maltese-to-Maltese marriages. Civil Marriages between Maltese-to-Foreigner spouses have shown a dramatic rise [Figure 3].



Source: Curia Office

Figure 3: Civil Marriages by Nationality

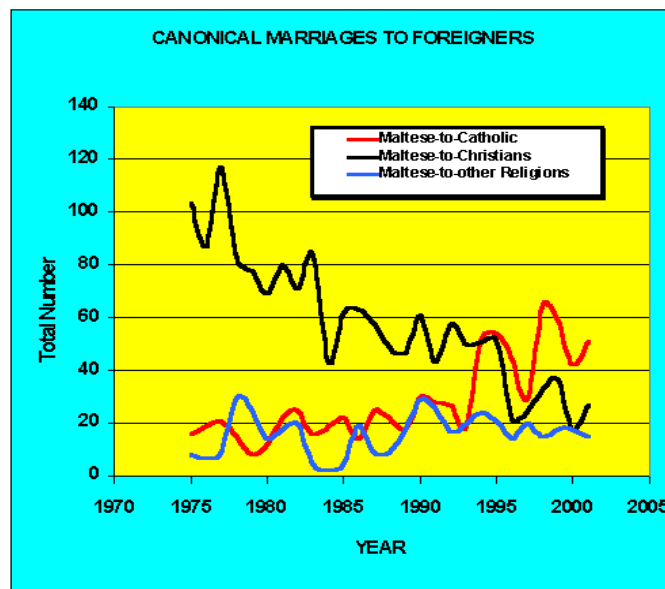
The rise in Civil Marriage numbers noted in Maltese-to-Foreign couples is not evident in Canonical Marriages involving mixed nationality marriages, these maintaining an approximate steady annual number [Figure 4].



Source: Curia Office

Figure 4: Mixed Nationality Marriages: Civil and Canonical

Canonical Marriages appear to have increased in Catholic couples; however the number of Catholic-to-Christian couples who opt for a Canonical Marriage has decreased. Canonical Marriages involving Catholic-to-Other Religion have maintained a more or less steady trend [Figure 5].



Source: Curia Office

Figure 5: Canonical Marriages

MARITAL BREAKDOWN

The Census Report for 2005 suggests that in the total population, individuals with a history of a failed marriage [separated/annulled/divorced – and not remarried] amount to 4.0% of the population aged 16 years or more [i.e. 1 in 25 of the population in Malta today aged 16 years or more has had a failed marriage]. The proportion reported in the previous Census in 1995 was 1.7% [i.e. 1 in 59]. The proportion in the 1985 census was similar at 1.1% [i.e. 1 in 91: the percentage change from 1985 to 1995 was 78.4%]. While the numbers appear small in comparison to the total population, the percent change in the number of individuals with a history of a failed marriage from 1995 to 2005 amounts to a staggering 161.9%. In numerical terms this means that the number of individuals with a history of a failed marriage has more than doubled in the last 10 years – 5098 in 1995 to 13354 in 2005 [Table 3]. In contrast the percent change in the population of married individuals has only risen by 7.5%, a figure approximately half that the observed rise in the total population [13.9%]. Maintaining the same proportionate rise in the various categories, the estimated number of individuals with a history of a failed marriage should reach ~35061 or 9.3% of the total population aged more than 16 years by 2015 [i.e. approximately 1 in 10 of the population aged more than 16 years would have been the victim of a failed marriage in eight years time].

Marital Status	1985	% total population	1995	% total population	2005	% total population	% change 2005/1995	Estimated 2015
Single [never married]	81454	31.6	84718	29.3	100803	30.6	19.0	119942
Married	156506	60.7	181875	62.8	195523	59.3	7.5	210195
Separated	2857	1.1	4120	1.7	11045	4.0	161.9	29610
Annulled/Divorced [not remarried]			978		2309			5451
Widowed [not remarried]	16886	6.6	16979	5.9	19248	5.8	13.4	21820
Re-married*	N/A		706	0.2	810	0.2	14.7	929
TOTAL POPULATION	257703	100.0	289549	100.0	329739	100.0	13.9	375507

Source: National Statistics Office

Table 3: Census Population aged 16 years and more by marital status: 1985/1995/2005/est.2015

* include individuals who have either annulled/divorced their previous marriage or were widowed

The increasing rate of marital breakdown in Maltese Society is also evident when one studies the trends in Crude Marriage rates and the Court Application for Separations for the period 1996-2005 [Table 4].

Year	Marriages	Crude Marriage Rate*	Law Court Separation Applications	Separation Application Rate*
1996	2370	6.2	893	2.4
1997	2414	6.3	914	2.4
1998	2376	6.2	940	2.4
1999	2409	6.2	1067	2.8
2000	2545	6.5	1048	2.7
2001	2194	5.6	1135	2.9
2002	2240	5.7	1214	3.1
2003	2350	5.9	1244	3.1
2004	2402	6.0	1112	2.8
2005	2374	5.9	1026	2.5

Source: National Statistics Office; Law Court Statistics

Table 4: Crude marriage and Separation application Rates
Maltese Islands: 1996-2005

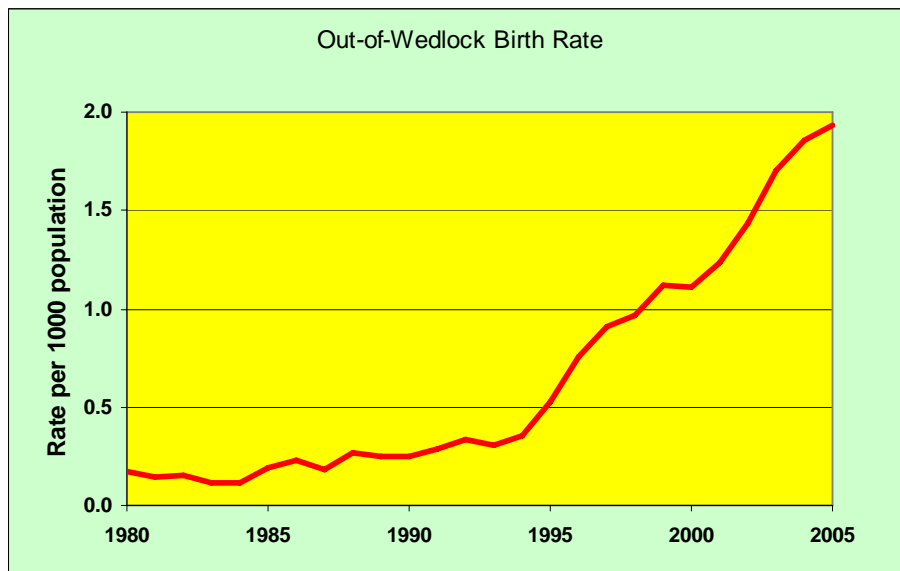
* Rate per 1000 population

Table 4 suggests that approximately over the last decade for every two marriages being registered there is one application to seek separation [23674 marriages against 10593 separation applications: 44.7%]. The situation appears to be worsening since during the 1996-2000 period the proportion was 40.1% [12114 marriages vs. 4862 separations]; the figure for the period 2001-2005 has risen to 49.6% [11560 marriages vs. 5731 separations]. A detailed analysis of the separation application cases is urgently required to assess the true number, age distribution, and duration of marriage.

The 4.0% “broken marriage” figure must be considered an alarming trend, especially when one considers that the 2005 United Kingdom census reports that 9.1% of individuals aged 16 years and more have reported a marital status of “divorced”.

CO-HABITATION

Another phenomenon which is becoming more prevalent in Maltese society is that of mutual co-habitation without the formality of either a civil or canonical marriage. There are no figures to indicate the size of the problem, however dedicated studies carried out on women having out-of-wedlock maternities in the Maltese Islands during the period 1999-2001 have shown that a large majority of these [62.8%] are aged 20 years or more; while 26.1% had had a previous out-of-wedlock maternities. That study [Savona-Ventura, 2003] suggests that a significant proportion of out-of-wedlock maternities are occurring to women in a steady co-habiting relationship. The rate of out-of-wedlock marriages has increased significantly since 1980 from 0.2 per 1000 population to 1.9 per 1000 population in 2005 [Figure 6].



Source: National Statistics Office

Figure 6: Out-of-Wedlock Maternities – Maltese Islands 1980-2005

CONCLUSIONS

The increasing trends towards secularization in the Maltese population should not be surprising. All the previous social studies carried out among samples or sectors of Maltese society have shown a trend towards a deterioration in the Catholic moral views of the population. The attitude towards sexuality and the associated problems of sexually transmitted disease including cervical carcinoma and out-of-wedlock pregnancies have been clearly demonstrated in the study alluded to above [Savona-Ventura, 2003]. Earlier now-outdated studies of small sample population studies in trends in attitude had shown a deteriorating situation well into the 1980s [Table 5]. The change in attitudes since 1993 has most likely taken at an even accelerated pace as evident from what appears to be, from the

National and Cura Statistics [see above] and the Sunday Mass Attendance [8] statistics, a greater abandonment of Catholic values in Maltese society. The Census of Sunday Mass Attendance should also be used as an eye-opener to changing attitudes in the Maltese. There has been a significant fall in Sunday Mass attendance from 81.9% in 1967 to 51.0% in 2005 [Figure 6]. The attendance has thus fallen by 10.7% between 1997 and 2005, i.e. at a rate of 1.07% per annum – a rate that is faster than that registered in the previous decade [at 0.9% per annum].

	1983 ⁶	1993 ⁷	Increase 1993/1983
Disagreement with Catholic Church stance on divorce	13.2%	26.8%	x2.03
Disagreement with Catholic Church stance on civil marriage	11.0%	23.3%	x2.12
Disagreement with Catholic Church stance on birth control	30.4%	42.9%	x1.41
Disagreement with Catholic Church stance on abortion	10.6%	19.5%	x1.84
Ready to end marriage through divorce	11.9%	16.8%	x1.41
Chose civil marriage if they had to remarry	1.0%	2.9%	x2.9
Prefer co-habitation to marriage	0.8%	3.2%	x4.0
The most important reason for a successful marriage is love between a married couple and their children	50.2%	44.9%	x0.89

Table 5: Deterioration Catholic Moral norms in Maltese Society – 1983/1993

Year	Number of Sunday Mass attendees	Percent total population
1967	198,150	81.9
1982	182,951	72.7
1995	183,220	61.7
2005	169,480	51.0

Table 6: Deterioration in Sunday Mass Attendance – 1967-2005

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