



Comparison of 2023 Marriage and Divorce Indicators between Indonesia and Other Countries

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2582-7138

Volume: 06

Issue: 04

July - August 2025

Received: 13-05-2025

Accepted: 14-06-2025

Published: 01-07-2025

Page No: 546-550

Abstract

This study aims to analyze marriage and divorce trends in Indonesia and compare them with two countries that have different characteristics, namely Japan (the lowest marriage rate) and the United States (the highest divorce rate). Data were obtained from official sources such as the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia, and relevant international institutions. Comparisons with Japan and the United States reveal significant differences in marriage and divorce patterns, which are influenced by social, cultural, economic, and policy factors. These findings provide a basis for the formulation of policies that support family stability in Indonesia.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54660/IJMRGE.2025.6.4.546-550>

Keywords: Marriage, Divorce, Marriage Trends, Divorce Trends, Marriage and Divorce Indicators

Introduction

Marriage and divorce are two important events in a society's life cycle that have far-reaching social and demographic impacts. Marriage forms the basis of the family as the smallest social unit, which supports the stability of society as a whole. Meanwhile, divorce often has consequences not only for the separated couple but also for the children, the social environment, and even the demographic structure of a country. In Indonesia, the divorce rate is recorded to be quite high, at around 28% of total marriages, making Indonesia one of the countries with the highest divorce rate in the Asia-Africa region (Kementrian Agama, 2022)^[1]. This condition has a significant impact on family empowerment, especially in terms of social and economic stability, which tends to weaken after divorce (Julijanto, Masrukhin, & Hayatuddin, 2016)^[2].

The phenomenon of changing marriage and divorce trends in Indonesia also reflects ongoing changes in social, economic, and technological values. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2023)^[3] shows that in the last five years, the marriage rate has decreased by around 15%, while the divorce rate has increased by 20% (Pekanbaru Religious High Court, 2024)^[4]. This shift reflects changing values in society, including more individualistic lifestyles, increased female participation in the workforce, and new priorities in terms of careers and relationships. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on marriage and divorce behavior, with a sharp decline in marriage and divorce rates due to social restrictions and administrative disruptions. However, divorce rates recovered more quickly to normal levels than marriage rates, which remained low until the end of 2020 (Hoehn-Velasco *et al.*, 2023)^[5].

Globally, marriage and divorce trends also show significant variations between countries. Global data show that since the 1970s, divorce rates have increased in many countries, although the rates and patterns vary depending on cultural, economic, and social policy factors (Herre *et al.*, 2023)^[6]. For example, in some developed countries, previously high divorce rates have begun to decline, while in other countries they are still on the rise. Shifting social values that are more individualistic and changing gender roles in society have also influenced marriage and divorce patterns in various parts of the world (Diana & Bahri, 2025)^[7].

In the Indonesian context, it is important to conduct an international comparative analysis to understand Indonesia's position in the global marriage and divorce dynamics.

This comparison can help identify the social, economic, and policy factors that influence these trends. For example, the high divorce rate in Indonesia is also linked to issues of domestic violence, internal family conflicts, and economic pressures, which are often the main causes of divorce (Asia News Network, 2023)^[8]. By comprehensively understanding the international and local contexts, more effective and targeted policies can be formulated to tackle the problems that arise.

This research aims to examine the phenomenon of marriage and divorce in Indonesia with an international comparative approach, in order to produce findings that not only illustrate the trends, but also provide a solid basis for the formulation of social policies that support family stability and community welfare in the midst of changing times and globalization.

Methods

This research uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive-comparative method, which aims to analyze marriage and divorce patterns in Indonesia and compare them with those of two countries, namely Japan and the United States. This approach was chosen because it is able to present phenomena statistically and allows analysis of differences between countries based on relevant demographic indicators.

In this study, two countries were chosen as comparators to represent contrasting demographic conditions with Indonesia. Japan was chosen as it is known to have a low marriage rate and an aging population, reflecting the social challenges related to declining birth rates and changing family structures. Meanwhile, the United States was chosen because it has a high divorce rate and a more flexible family system, reflecting family dynamics in a more individualistic society. The selection of these two countries is expected to provide a broader perspective in analyzing marriage and divorce patterns globally.

The data used in this study are secondary data obtained from official institutions of each country. For Indonesia, data was obtained from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia, and various government publications related to marriage and divorce. Data for Japan was obtained from the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (NIPSSR), while data for the United States was obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), specifically through the publication of the National Marriage and Divorce Rate Trends.

This study observes several key indicators, namely: Crude Marriage Rate, Crude Divorce Rate, Divorce-to-marriage ratio, and supporting social factors such as education level, urbanization, and religiosity. These indicators were selected to capture both the quantitative aspects of demographic change and the qualitative dimensions of societal behavior toward marriage and divorce.

The analysis was conducted through several stages:

- Descriptive statistics, in the form of tables, to illustrate the trend of marriage and divorce in Indonesia in the last 10-15 years.
- International comparison, by comparing Indonesia with Japan and the United States.
- Interpretation of results based on each country's literature, policies, and social context.

Through this approach, data was analyzed to identify

common patterns, changes, and significant differences between countries. In addition, this research also aims to uncover causal factors that explain these differences, such as cultural values, levels of religiosity, legal policies, and state intervention in family institutions.

Literature Review

1. Basic demographic concepts of marriage and divorce

Marriage is defined as a legal bond between a man and a woman recognized by law, religion, or custom. With the intention of building a harmonious and lasting household based on belief in God Almighty (BPS, 2020)^[9]. The Marriage Law states that marriage aims to create a prosperous and lasting family. For this reason, married couples need to work together and complement each other in order to maximize their potential and achieve physical and mental happiness (Alma, 2019)^[10]. A marriage can end for several reasons, namely the death of one of the parties, divorce, or a judge's decision.

Divorce is the legal dissolution of a marriage bond that results in the end of the rights and obligations of husband and wife. In a demographic context, divorce affects household composition, fertility, and socioeconomic dynamics (Amato, 2020)^[11].

The main indicators of marriage include the marriage rate, the average age of first marriage, and the proportion of the population who are unmarried. On the other hand, divorce indicators include the divorce rate, divorce-to-marriage ratio, and the duration of marriage before divorce (United Nations Statistics Division, 2019)^[12]. The measures of marriage and divorce include: Crude Marriage Rate, Age-Specific Marriage Rate, Crude Divorce Rate, and General Divorce Rate.

2. Factors affecting marriage and divorce

Based on the empirical study, it was found that factors affecting marriage and divorce include: Marriage Age, Education Level, Economy, Urbanization, Gender Roles, and Government Policies. Research by the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN, 2019)^[13] shows that the age of early marriage (<20 years) correlates with a 2.3 times higher risk of divorce in Indonesia. In Indonesia, the ideal age for first marriage is considered to be 23–25 years for women and 25–28 years for men.

Education level affects marital resilience. Couples with high school education and above have a 40% lower divorce rate. However, an education gap of more than 3 years between spouses increases the risk of divorce (Arifin, 2020)^[14], demonstrating the complexity of this factor's influence. Previous results related to economic factors. There are 65% of divorce cases due to economic problems. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the situation by increasing the divorce rate by 27% (Supreme Court of Indonesia, 2021)^[15]. Household economic stability is a major determinant of marital resilience in Indonesia.

In terms of urbanization factors, data (BPS, 2024)^[16] reveal a significant difference in divorce rates between urban (2.1 per 1000 population) and rural (1.3 per 1000 population). This is related to changes in family values and the pressures of living in urban areas (Firman, 2019)^[17].

Gender roles are also a contributing factor; research results in East Java show 58% of household conflicts stem from an imbalance in gender roles. Disproportionate division of roles often triggers marital tension (Nurmalita, 2021)^[18]. In addition

to the factors above, the positive impact of Law No.16/2019 is in suppressing child marriage. Meanwhile, Supreme Court Regulation No.5/2019 on Mediation has successfully increased the resolution of marital conflicts, demonstrating the influence of policies on marriage dynamics (Komnas Perempuan, 2022) ^[19].

Results and Discussion

1. Trends in Marriage and Divorce in Indonesia in the Last 10-15 Years

Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics shows that marriage trends in Indonesia have undergone significant changes in the last 10-15 years. In the period 2010-2023, the average age of first marriage increased from 22 years to 24

years for women and from 25 years to 27 years for men, especially in urban areas. This is in line with increased access to higher education and awareness of family planning. However, in absolute terms, the number of marriages is declining, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021), where there has been a decline of up to 30% due to social restrictions and economic uncertainty (BPS, 2023) ^[20]. Meanwhile, divorce rates have fluctuated, with an increase in cases in religious courts since 2015 (Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023) ^[21]. Regions with the highest divorce rates are generally in Java (West Java, Central Java, and East Java), while regions such as Aceh and West Nusa Tenggara tend to have lower divorce rates due to the influence of strong religious and cultural norms.

Table 1: National Trends (2010 – 2023)

Year	Marriage Age Rate (Female)	Marriage Age Rate (Male)	Number of Marriages (Million)	Number of Divorces (Thousand)	Divorced by Women (%)	Divorce/Marriage Ratio (%)
2010	22	25.1	2.10	240	58	11.4
2015	22.8	26	1.85	285	63	15.4
2020	23.5	26.9	1.40	375	67	26.8
2022	23.9	27.2	1.66	408	68	24.6
2023*	24.1	27.3	1.67	417	70	25

Source: BPS - Population Statistics (2010-2023)

2. International Comparison

Comparing Indonesia's marriage and divorce data with two countries with different characteristics, namely Japan, which has the lowest marriage rate and an aging population (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2024) ^[22] and the United States, which has a high divorce rate but flexible family policies (National Center for Health Statistics, 2024) ^[23]. A comparative analysis follows:

Table 2: Comparison of 2023 Marriage and Divorce Indicators

Indicators	Country		
	Indonesia	Jepang	Amerika Serikat
Crude Marriage Rate	6.1	3.9	6.2
Crude Divorce Rate	1.5	1.5	2.5

Source: BPS - Marriage and Divorce Statistics (2023), Population Statistics of Japan (2023), Marriage and Divorce Statistics (2023).

The 2023 data shows an interesting pattern of marriage and divorce rates per 1,000 population in the three countries:

- Indonesia has a marriage rate of 6.1% and a divorce rate of 1.5%
- Japan has a low marriage rate of 3.9% and a low divorce rate of 1.5%, indicating a population crisis due to declining interest in marriage.
- The United States, with a high marriage rate of 6.2% and a high divorce rate of 2.5%, represents an individualistic society with fluid family dynamics.

This difference is influenced by unique socio-cultural factors in each country. Indonesia needs to maintain family stability, Japan faces demographic challenges, while the United States needs to address the impact of divorce. This data is important for contextualizing family policy (Firdaus *et al.*, 2022). ^[24]

3. Factors Contributing to Differences in Marriage and Divorce Patterns between Countries.

Differences in marriage and divorce patterns between Indonesia, Japan, and the United States are the result of complex interactions between social, economic, and cultural

factors, as well as legal and institutional policies in each country.

a) Social and Cultural Factors

When viewed from this factor in Indonesia, strong religious values and social norms make marriage a moral obligation that must be carried out by every person, while, in contrast, divorce, which is still considered a taboo prohibited by religion. In Japan, they are facing a crisis of interest in marriage due to individualistic lifestyles, the social burdens that women often face, as well as career pressures experienced by everyone (Matsuda *et al.*, 2023) ^[25]. In the United States, the individualistic culture and social acceptance of most people there can be said to be high enough that the acceptance of divorce has led to soaring divorce rates, although the trend is declining among millennials who prefer to have relationships without official status.

b) Economic Factors

Economic problems are often the main cause of divorce in Indonesia, especially during the pandemic that occurred yesterday. But not only in Indonesia, in Japan, due to job instability and economic stagnation, there has been a decline in marriage rates from year to year (Raymo *et al.*, 2013) ^[26]. Meanwhile, in the United States itself, couples who have lower education and income tend to be prone to divorce, while middle-class couples or those who can be said to have a stable economy tend to have stable relationships as well.

c) Gender Roles and Education

In Indonesia and Japan, gender role inequality is still one of the main triggers of domestic conflict. In Indonesia, the imbalance in the division of domestic tasks between husband and wife often triggers tensions and becomes a reason for divorce, especially in urban areas. In Japan, many women choose not to marry due to high social expectations to leave their careers and devote themselves entirely to their families. Meanwhile, in the United States, despite more equal access to education and employment for women, the education gap

between spouses is still a factor that increases the risk of divorce, especially when the difference in education levels is significant.

d) State policies

In Indonesia and Japan, unequal gender roles are still one of the main triggers of domestic conflict. In Indonesia, the imbalance in the division of domestic tasks between husband and wife often triggers tensions and becomes a reason for divorce, especially in urban areas. In Japan, many women choose not to marry due to high social expectations to leave their careers and devote themselves entirely to their families. Meanwhile, in the United States, despite more equal access to education and employment for women, the education gap between spouses is still a factor that increases the risk of divorce, especially when the difference in education levels is significant (Schwartz & Han, 2014) ^[27].

4. Maintaining Family Stability for Marriage Quality

Research by Rezki and Rizkillah (2022) ^[28] shows that family interaction and social resilience have a significant influence on marital quality, especially in families of informal working mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was conducted on 100 families in the Jabodetabek area and used a quantitative approach. The results showed that although most families had a high level of social resilience, almost half experienced low marital quality. Interaction factors within the family, as well as the age of marriage, were shown to significantly improve the quality of husband and wife relationships. This finding confirms that family stability and harmony are strongly influenced by the intensity of communication and social support within the household, especially in crisis conditions. Therefore, maintaining the quality of interactions between family members is an important aspect in maintaining family resilience and stability, especially for vulnerable groups such as families with informal working mothers.

One of the major demographic challenges in Japan is the declining interest of the younger generation in getting married, mainly due to concerns over economic conditions and job instability. Japanese government surveys show that an increasing number of men and women of working age are delaying or even refusing marriage because they feel financially unable to establish a household. This contributes to the low birth rate and exacerbates the population crisis Japan is facing (PSKK, 2016) ^[29].

Empirical data shows that US society is experiencing a "liquid family" phenomenon, with high marriage and divorce rates reflecting strong individualistic values, along with a regime of family flexibility. Families are becoming more flexible, and emotional transactions are increasingly used as a standard in deciding whether to stay or end a marriage due to theories about liquid family dynamics in modern society (Toth & Kemmelmeier, 2009) ^[30].

Conclusion

This study shows that the dynamics of marriage and divorce in Indonesia have changed significantly in the past decade. The increasing age of marriage, declining number of marriages, and rising divorce rates are reflections of changing social, economic, and cultural values. Indonesia faces challenges in maintaining family stability, which is now increasingly affected by economic factors, gender role inequality, and shifting values of the younger generation towards the institution of marriage.

Comparisons with Japan and the United States reinforce an understanding of the diverse factors that shape marriage and divorce patterns in each country. Japan faces serious demographic challenges due to low interest in marriage, much of which is influenced by economic uncertainty and social expectations of women. Meanwhile, the United States shows similarly high marriage and divorce rates, reflecting an individualist society with fluid and flexible family patterns, where the decision to marry or divorce is based more on personal satisfaction than social norms.

These contextual differences suggest that policies that support families need to be designed by considering the socio-cultural conditions of each country. In Indonesia, strengthening family stability through improving the quality of communication, balancing gender roles, and protecting the household economy are important steps in reducing divorce rates and maintaining family resilience. In addition, learning from other countries can be a reference in formulating contextual and adaptive policies to changing times.

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