

Marija Bušelić<sup>1</sup>

UDK 314.5:314.87>(497.5)

Review  
Pregledni rad

## FAMILY STRUCTURE AND DEMOGRAPHIC PICTURE IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

### ABSTRACT

*The analyses of population movements in the Republic of Croatia are characterized by depopulation features, which have been especially prominent since 1991. Natural and mechanical population movements contribute to total depopulation. Natural depopulation is mostly caused by diminution in the number of marriages, divorce increment as well as marriages without children. An empirical research on students' population has been applied in our work in order to identify their attitudes towards marriage, family and children.*

*The results point to students' positive attitudes and the fact that these attitudes reflect their family structure and their provenience (urban, rural). They associate their positive attitudes with the later entry into marriage as a consequence of social and economic factors.<sup>2</sup>*

**Key words:** family, marriage, depopulation, population

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by enhanced changes in nuptiality and divortiality rates as well as natural population growth rates in the majority of the European Union member states. The underlined unfavourable phenomena in demographic movements in the developed countries are also visible in demographic movements in the Republic of Croatia. The mentioned trends result in a late entry into marriage, smaller number of children, giving birth at an older age and divorcing more often. Most of this changes sprang up from the development of the economic structure and socio-economic processes. The consequence was higher participation of women in the labour market, which was enabled by enhanced job and employment accessibility, change of propensity and attitude towards women, higher integration in the educational process and the growth of women's real wages. Therefore, women became more independent of the material existence, which was visible in the decrease of the birth rate and high divorce rate.

The highlighted changes contributed to natural depopulation which will certainly affect future demographic movements.

The purpose of this paper is to research when these important changes in nuptiality and divortiality rates as well as natural population growth rates in the Republic of Croatia occurred and how they have influenced country's demographic picture.

In demographic literature, it is well known that factors, which affect changes and birth rates, affect also the number of marriages. Because of today's situation and the future Croatian demographic picture forecast, the purpose of this work is to identify young population's (working and natural reproduction age) opinions and attitudes to marriage,

---

<sup>1</sup> University Juraj Dobrila of Pula Department of Economics and Tourism «Dr. Mijo Mirković»

<sup>2</sup> Paper received 13 October 2009.

family and children. To meet this aim an anonymous survey among the student population of the University of Juraj Dobrila in Pula will be conducted .

## **2. FAMILY STRUCTURE**

Families are a constituent part of the economic structure of the population that have an important impact on the social and economic development and that is why it is important to research the structure of the family. The economic structure of the population could be related to their economic activity, occupation, occupational rank and features of the settlement or to active population and workforce that has to be grouped according to mentioned features and see the source of their income. This paper will borrow definitions from the official statistics since the Croatian historiography does not contain any notions related to the family structure. For the purpose of this paper the analysis will include a number of marriages and divorces and their features, a number of children in families, a number of children in single parent families and a number of children of divorced parents.

The family structure varies from society to society. The smallest family community is known as the nuclear family and it consists of a father and a mother and their underage children (Gelo, J., Akrap, A., Čipin, I., pg. 151, 2005).

There are several definitions of family: statistical, jurisdictional, institutional, social and other.

The most important for economists is the statistical definition used for population census. According to this definition family is a narrow family community including:

- ❖ parents (both or just one) and their children who are not married or
- ❖ a man and a woman without children or a man and a woman who cohabit<sup>3</sup>

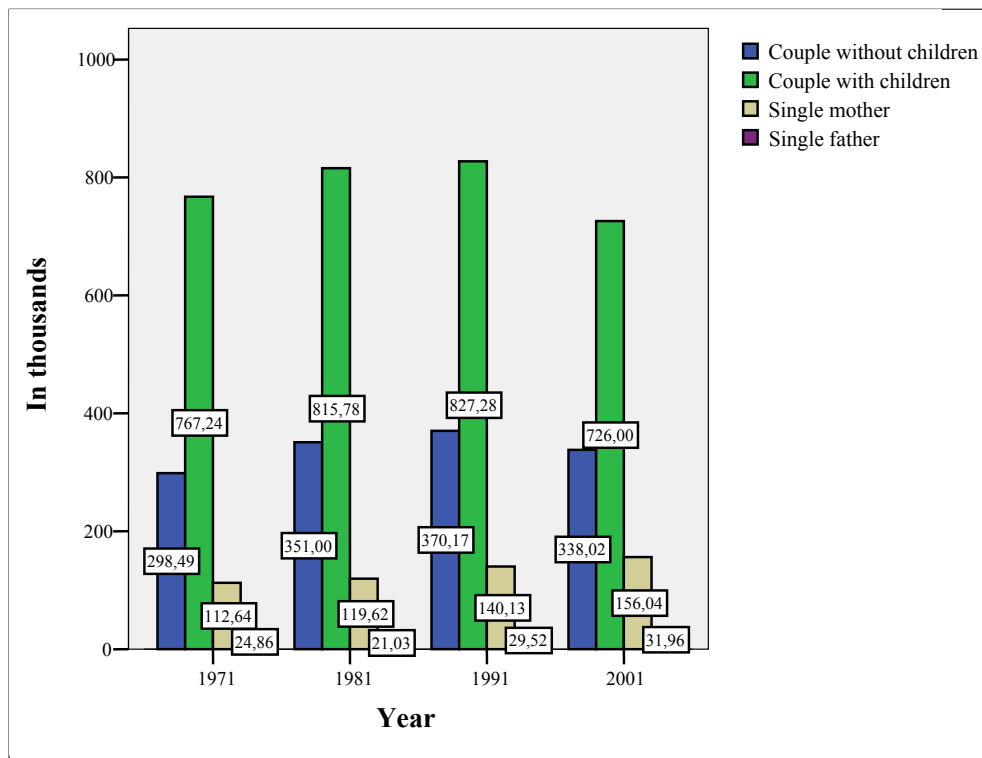
Marriage is the foundation of the family, although in modern society today it is more often the case of cohabitation and incomplete families. The relationship between partners acquires personal as well as social dimension. In spite of the increase in the divorce rate, alternative lifestyles and more children who are born outside marriage, family remains the central social institution. Because of its importance and its role, the family has to be considered in greater detail (Figure 1).

---

<sup>3</sup> Puljiz, V. (2002): "Hrvatska obiteljska politika u europskom kontekstu", *Revija za socijalnu politiku*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pg. 121

Figure 1

Family types according to population censuses



Source: Authors' interpretation according to the Republic of Croatia Statistic Yearbook, Republic of Croatia – Central Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb, 2007, pg 88

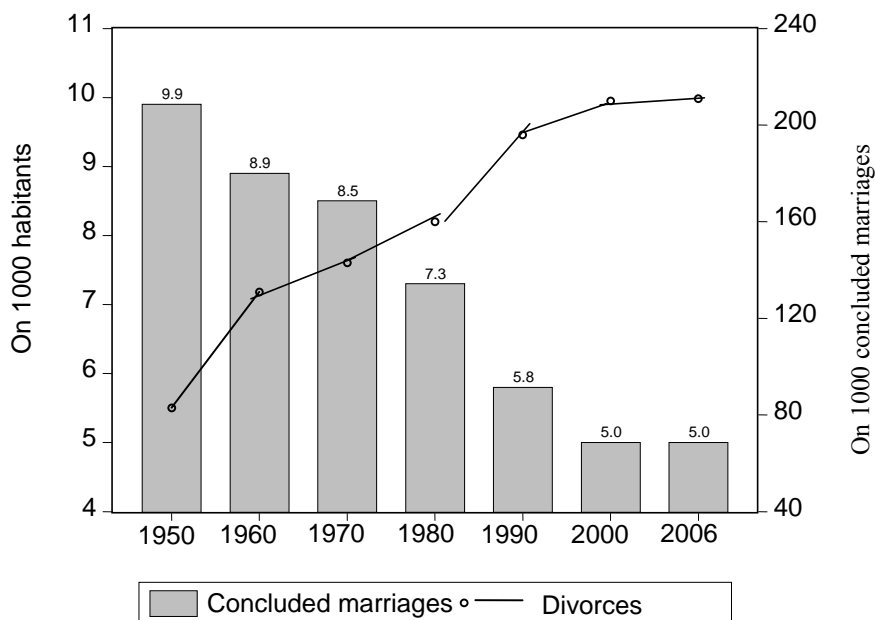
The total number of families in the Republic of Croatia augmented from 1.203.240 in 1971 to 1.307.423 in 1981 to 1.367.106 in 1991. According to the 2001 population census the number of families was reduced by 9,01% or 124.081, which can be explained by the reduction of included population or mechanical movements. Cohabitation is defined as the non official living together of a man and a woman. In our country more and more families consist of a single parent, man or woman, who lives with their child or more of them. The number of such families increased between 1971 and 2001. The rate of single parent families in 1971 amounted to 11,5%, in 1991 12,4% and 15,0% in 2001. In such families the rate of single mothers amounted to 83,0% and single fathers included 17,0% of single parents families. In the same period the number of marriages with no children rose from 24,8% in 1971 to 27,15 in 1991. The analysis of the number of children in families indicates that it reached the highest level in 1971, most probably as the result of the “baby-boom” generation. But since the 1971 population census the number of married couples with children has diminished.

### 3. MARRIAGE AND ITS RELEVANT FEATURES

The foundation of marriage is the relationship between two individuals and the obligations and rights which arise from it. The way a marriage is concluded depends on an individual, community, culture, religion or society. There are two essential marriage types present in all societies: monogamy and polygamy. Polygamy has two varieties: polygamy and polyandry.<sup>4</sup> Polygamy is the type of marriage where a spouse can have more than one partner. Polygyny – a situation when a man has two or more wives is more common. Polyandry is rarer. This term defines a marriage where a wife has two or more partners. Monogamy, the marriage between a man and a woman, prevails in western societies and that is the case with the Republic of Croatia as well. Today marriage has two important functions: personal and social. There is a difference between personal and private connection between two people and family including a particular interest and social group. The development of society influences the change of the attitude towards marriage, therefore, the importance of marriage fades and the number of divorces and single mothers experiences a growth. On the other hand, long-term analysis of marriages concluded in Croatia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century confirmed that more than 90% of children were born in marriage. This is an important determinant of the birth-rate (Gelo, J., Akrap, A., Čipin, I., 2005, pg 174). The factors which influenced the reduction of concluded marriages through time are: developmental and non-demographic (wars, economic and political crises and related migrations).

A continuous fall of concluded marriages and the growth of divorce is evident considering a 50 year period in Croatia. (Picture 2)

**Figure 2**  
**Concluded marriages and divorces in the Republic of Croatia from year 1950 to 2006**



Source: Author's interpretation according to the Report on Women and Men in Croatia 2008, Republic of Croatia – Central Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb, 2008, pg 15

<sup>4</sup> Fanuko, N. (1997): Sociologija, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, pg. 105

The number of concluded marriages in Croatia since 1950 is in diminution while at the same time the number of divorces is on a rise.. 37.995 marriages were concluded and 3.137 ended in divorce in Croatia in 1950. The number of concluded marriages in 2006 diminished by 42% in comparison to 1950, while the number of divorces rose by 33%.

Notwithstanding the important role that the family has in marriage, the number of divorces and children pertaining to one parent are on a rise which is illustrated by the index of divorces and the number of dependent children between 1960 and 2006 (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Divorces according to dependent children in the Republic of Croatia**

	Divorces		Number of sustained children	Children pertaining to:			
	Total	With sustained children		Mother	Father	Mother and father	Other
1960	4 811	2 354	3 344	78,8	14,9	5,7	0,6
1970	5 333	2 821	3 888	79,2	14,7	4,8	1,2
1980	5 342	3 020	4 282	84,4	10,2	4,5	0,8
1990	5 466	3 363	4 998	83,8	11,5	3,5	1,2
2000	4 419	2 764	4 208	86	10,2	3,1	0,6
2006	4 651	1 614	4 067	83	10,5	4,8	1,7

Source: The Report on Women and men in Croatia 2008, Republic of Croatia – Central Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb, 2008, pg 15

In 1960 out of 4.811 divorces, 2.354 were couples with children. The number of divorces rose in 1990s and after that period it began to fall. In the year 2006 there were 4.651 divorced married couples, 1.614 had children. Although the number of divorces was slightly lower than in the sixties, the number of children in such marriages was smaller. It means that the marriage period was shorter and that couples whose marriage was doomed to failure and break-up did not consider enlarging their family. This condition is probably the result of fast and continuous changes in Croatian political and economic life. These changes along with the particular situation in Croatia, caused by the Civil War and its consequences (the economic crises, unemployment and residential issues) certainly contributed to changes in the family structure.

After the divorce, children are mostly assigned to the mother, and just a little percentage is assigned to the father. In 1960s 78,8% of children were assigned to their mother, while 14,9% were assigned to the father. In 1970s the situation significantly changed. In the eighties the percentage of children assigned to the mother was higher (84,4%) as a result of their economic independence gained by their rising number entering the labour market.

Divorces are structured on the basis of the index of national statistics in Table 3. They are based on legal divorce. Separations and cohabitation are not a part of the official statistics. The inclusion of children from this type of marriage would pose a difficulty and the real situation would be different from the official statistics.

### **3.1. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CONCLUDED MARRIAGES AND DIVORCES IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA IN COMPARISON TO THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Croatia is getting ready to enter the European Union. This fact includes several interventions in the economic and other fields. One of the relevant fields is demography and the correspondent demographic structure, as well as the situation and comparison of concluded marriages and divorces in Croatia and in the European Union between 1997 and 2006. The analysis for the European Union will be carried out for EU (27 countries) and the selected countries.

By researching and analyzing the EUROSTAT<sup>5</sup> indexes it was established that the rate of concluded marriage per 1000 inhabitants amounted to 5,40‰ in Croatia in 1997, which was higher than the average EU-27 rate amounting to 5,17‰. In the European Union Sweden had the lowest rate of concluded marriages (3,65‰), Slovenia (3,78‰), Latvia (3,98‰) and Estonia (3,99‰), the highest rates were evidenced in Lichtenstein (12,55‰) and Cyprus (10,71‰). In Croatia this rate of concluded marriage remained around 5‰ throughout the observed period, while in the European Union the rate of concluded marriages was around 5‰ until the year 2000. In 2001 it fell and for the rest of the period, that is, until 2005 it amounted to around 4,8‰. Slovenia had the lowest rate of concluded marriages throughout the observed period (in 2006 -3,17‰) which was the lowest rate in the EU-27. In Sweden the rate of concluded marriages raised constantly in the observed period, from 3,65‰ (very low) in 1997 to 5,02‰ in 2006. This rate was above the EU-27 average, which was between the highest rate of 6,80‰ in 2006 in Cyprus and the Slovenian lowest rate of 3,17‰. Besides Cyprus, other countries had this above average rate: Denmark (6,71‰), Romania (6,79‰), Latvia (6,39), Lithuania (6,26‰), Malta (6,25‰). We can conclude that in more than a half of the EU-27 countries, a total of 17, the rate of concluded marriages was between 4,13‰ (Italy) and 4,81‰ (Slovakia). In spite of negative demographic movements Croatia's rate was higher than the average European Union's rate of concluded marriages.

The same countries are analysed in the next sequence of concluded marriages and divorces between 1991 and 2006. The divorce rate throughout the whole period under consideration (1997 – 2006) in the Republic of Croatia was below the EU-27 and from 1997 to 2001 it was under 1‰ (0,8 – 0,9). In 2000 it rose to 1,0‰ and from 2001 to 2006 it constantly amounted to 1,1‰. In the EU-27 the rate was twice higher in comparison to the Croatian one and it amounted to 1,8‰. In 2003 it was kept below 2 (1,8 – 1,9) and after that it remained stable until the end of the period under consideration. This rate was almost twice higher than the one in the Republic of Croatia.

Ireland had the lowest divorce rate among the EU-27. At the beginning of the period under consideration its divorce rate is irrelevant (0,0%). From 1998 to 2005 it slightly rose and it was between 0,4 and 0,8‰. Italy as a catholic country where divorce was forbidden for a long time, this rate was also low and it was between 0,6 in 1997 to 0,8 in 2005. A low divorce rate, very close to the one recorded in the Republic of Croatia, was registered in Greece and Spain. Slovenia was also a country with a low divorce rate varying between 1,0‰ and 1,2‰ for the period under consideration. Estonia had the highest divorce among the EU-27 countries 3,8‰, but this rate decreased during the period under consideration and it was lower for one promille in 2006. However, Czech Republic had also a high divorce rate, 3,2‰, and it kept it during the whole period, unlike Estonia. The divorce analysis results show that at the beginning of the period, as well as at the end of it, 15 countries had a divorce rate higher than 2‰. It was between 2,1 and 2,8‰. Most of these countries kept the same divorce rate.

<sup>5</sup> EUROSTAT. Available on: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

The trend of depopulation in the European Union can be confirmed through this analysis by the stagnation rate and even by the smaller number of concluded marriages and the higher rate of divorces. This is the case with the Republic of Croatia as well. Regardless of the fact that this trend is less visible in Croatia than in the European Union, it has led to the same phenomenon – depopulation followed by population ageing and demographic implosion.

#### 4. DEMOGRAPHIC PICTURE IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

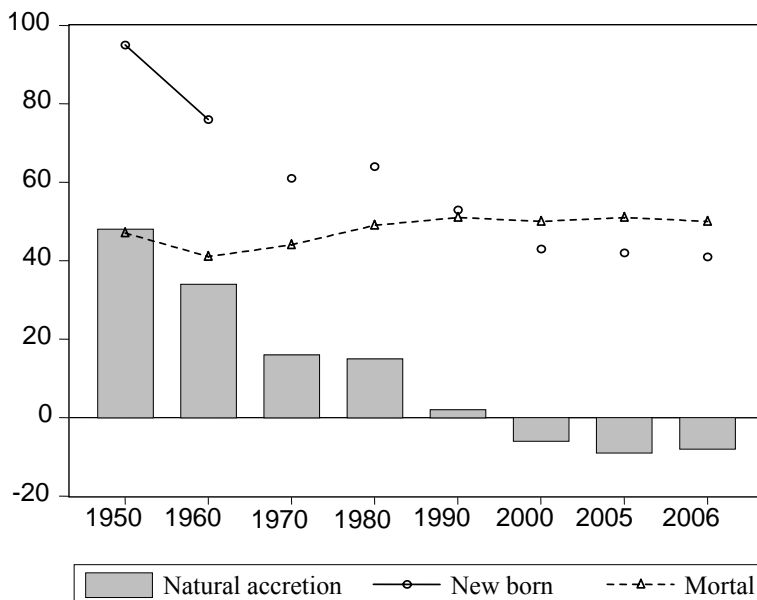
In this chapter the paper studies and analyses the natural population growth in the Republic of Croatia, population migrations in the Republic of Croatia from 1971 until 2001 and the family and population policies.

##### 4.1. NATURAL POPULATION GROWTH IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Because of negative trends in the fields of marriage and divorce, it is necessary to analyse the natural population growth as well in order to understand better the Croatian demographic picture. Therefore, in this chapter the paper deals with the reproductive function of the family. It deals with population's biological reproduction, which in modern society mainly takes place within a family. New birth in a family means new members of society.

Figure 3 shows the natural population growth in the Republic of Croatia from 1950 until 2006.

**Figure 3**  
**Natural population growth in the Republic of Croatia from 1950 until 2006**



Source: Author's interpretation pursuant to the Report on Women and men in Croatia 2008, Republic of Croatia – Central Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb, 2008, pg 13

There were 95.174 newborn children in 1950 and this number has been reduced to half until today amounting to 41.446. There are more new born male children in our country, but more male population dies, so the number of men and women is almost equal. The number of deaths has decreased in comparison to 1950, but in the sixties it rose and in 2006 it amounted to 50.378. The alterations in the natural population growth emerged on the surface on account of all these indicators. In 1950 the trend was positive amounting to 48.094 and since then it has a tendency to fall. Table 3 indicates that the negative natural population growth is not a result of a higher mortality rate but of the low birth rate in the Republic of Croatia. The mortality rate does not oscillate much throughout the period under consideration while the birth rate has been significantly and constantly decreasing.

The biggest changes of the natural population growth in the Republic of Croatia occurred during 1990s and they still continue. The result is the negative natural population growth .

#### **4.2. POPULATION MOVEMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA IN THE PERIOD FROM 1970 UNTIL 2001**

In order to integrate the so far explored indicators the aim of this chapter is to analyse population's age and sex structure for the purpose of better understanding the Croatian demographic picture.

The population age, besides the demographic importance (fertility, connubiality, mortality), is a very important category which with its structure takes a very important place in understanding of the functioning of a society . Analysing the total population movement according to the population census carried out in 1971 compared to 1961 it is clear that the increase of the population is negligible. ( $4.159.696 / 4.169.887$ )<sup>6</sup>. There was a change in the age group of the population structure between the ages of 25 and 49. There was an increase by 50,40% or 118.998 of inhabitants compared to 1971. This was certainly a consequence of the "baby-boom. Results indicate better health condition of the population and life prolongation in the over 60 age group . According to the 1991 population census the highest decrease in population was in the age group 0 – 4 . However, the total population number had grown in comparison to 1981 by 2,45% or 107.910 inhabitants. Obviously this was the result of life prolongation. What is specific for that period is the fact that this was the first time after the war that male and female population was equalised, which should have resulted in the creation of better conditions for the family formation. The 2001 population census was on the one hand expected and on the other hand astonishing. Furthermore, it indicated the first reduction in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it also indicated a high reduction by 6,5% or 294.630 inhabitants in the Croatian population. The reduction was present in all age groups as a consequence of the war which emerged to the surface throughout the whole census period from year 1991 to 2001. These unfavourable consequences will continue even in the forthcoming periods as indicated by the population movement forecast for the Republic of Croatia.

#### **4.3. FAMILY AND POPULATION POLICIES**

In many European countries a stimulating pro-birth population policy containing pro-birth measures has been trying to stop further birth-rate reduction. . With these measures parents are stimulated to enlarge their families in accordance to their wishes and possibilities. Stimulating effects have already shown positive results at the beginning of the nineties

<sup>6</sup> Statistic Yearbook 1998, DZSRH, Zagreb, December 1998 and 2002, November 2002, the source refers to all the absolute total in the text



(Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria). The first effect was further birth-rate reduction. The second effect was a slight birth-rate growth in Scandinavian countries. The latter is a matter of an absolute children support policy, which encourages free decision making regarding the number of children, the freedom of choosing the time between birth and responsible parenting, further it refers to indirect birth-rate augmentation, with reference to special policies (residential policy, fiscal and credit policy, policy for creating and expanding the infrastructure for helping working women with children, adequate labour legislation especially for women working time, etc.). In order to rejuvenate and achieve a numeric growth of population the Croatian Parliament adopted the National Population Policy on 24 December 2006.

Family policy is a unique and systematic frameset of measures in favour of the family; first of all for families with children, and the population policy is focused on goals related to population movement and structure.<sup>7</sup> Family and population policies are interconnected and they mainly coincide. The most important measures of the family policy, and therefore of population policy as well, are as following: child allowance, tax relieves, family services, paid maternity and parental leave. The main components of the family policy are money transfers, allowances and relieves mostly aimed at bigger families with children. Therefore, we can say that family policy is an important component of the population policy.

The majority of the measures mentioned in the document are still not implemented, so it is necessary to institutionalise a family support system. Measures such as children allowance, pro-birth income for the third and fourth child and the additional child allowance from the local and regional administration units depend on the number of children and the family income.

According to the Health Insurance Act the employed woman is entitled to salary remuneration: during her sick leave because of pregnancy complications and temporary inability to work on account of pregnancy, during the obligatory maternity leave, during the maternity leave raging from six months until a child turns 1, within the adoptive parent leave and within the breast feeding intermission. An unemployed mother, a mother attending a regular education or an unemployed mother who receives an invalid pension for professional disability has also the right to receive the maternity allowance until a child is one year old. Exceptionally, a mother of twins, triples or more children is entitled to a three year maternity leave. The father of a child is entitled to a paid leave for the birth of a child pursuant to the collective agreement or an internal book of regulations. The father has also the right to use parental leave, in case the mother is employed and she wants to go back to work after her maternity leave.

According to the Retirement Insurance Act, during the maternity leave, the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance pays the pension contribution. The child's father has the right to use the parental leave if the mother returned to work after the obligatory period of six months of maternity leave or exceptionally after 42 days after the birth – in that case the father can use one year parental leave, or respectively three years, providing that he is employed or if the child's mother has died, has abandoned the child or in any other case in which she is not able to take care of the child. In these cases the father does not have to be employed.

Population and family policies measures need to be studied and its effects need to be analysed on regular basis in order to identify their results.

---

<sup>7</sup> Damjanić, Z. (2007): Stavovi studentica Ekonomskog fakulteta u Zagrebu prema djeci i obiteljskoj politici, Ekonomski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb, pg 81

## **5. RESEARCH RESULTS ANALYSIS**

The research is based on survey's data. The survey consisted of 13 questions and every question had at least three offered answers. The conducted research is preliminary and should be a substantiating document for future research at a regional level. The survey was held at the University of Juraj Dobrila, at the Department for Economics and Tourism "Dr. Mijo Mirkovic" in Pula among undergraduate students. The sample included 273 students, 11 questionnaires were invalid, so the data analysis was carried out on the basis of 262 questionnaires. The survey was held in May 2009. The goal of this research was to identify students' attitude towards marriage and children in context of a low birth-rate in the Republic of Croatia.

### **5.1. RESPONDENTS' BASIC SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FEATURES**

The survey was carried out among undergraduate students aged between 19 and 22 years old. 71,55% of students included in the research are female and 28,45% are male. The majority grew up in villages or smaller towns, while the rest grew up in larger cities. The biggest percentage of respondents is from Istria, so it is understandable that most of them live with their parents because they are students. However, significant number of respondents live in rented apartments because more and more students from different parts of Croatia come to Pula and the majority of them is religious.

### **5.2. SURVEY'S RESULTS**

Relative results related to marriage and birth-rate according to respondents' sex are shown in Table 1 as enclosed.

Research results indicate the following:

- ❖ Most of the students live in families consisting of four members and their parents are not divorced. In the future they would like to get married, they would like a religious ceremony and they would like to have two children. Female students would like to marry between the ages of 25 and 30, while male student would like to do it a little bit later between the ages of 27 and 30. Regarding their provenience and religiousness, the high percentage of respondents who grew up in villages or smaller towns and consider themselves religious live in families consisting of five members, while the respondents who grew up in a city mostly live in families consisting of three members. A high percentage of divorced or temporarily separated parents are the parents of respondents who grew up in larger cities and who do not consider themselves religious. The reason to this might be the fact that church does not approve divorce, while on the other hand the smaller number of divorces of respondents' parents who grew up in villages might be a consequence of the traditional way of living in the rural areas which does not approve divorce. A very small percentage of respondents who do not want to get married grew up in larger cities. The rest of the respondents who grew up in larger cities would like to marry and respondents who consider themselves religious would like to marry, between the ages of 27 and 30, while respondents who grew up in villages and smaller cities would like to do it between the ages of 25 and 27. Non-religious respondents would also like to marry between the ages of 27 and 30 and later.. Although the majority of respondents would like to have a religious ceremony a higher percentage of non religious persons prefers a civil one.
- ❖ If moving was a condition for concluding a marriage, male and female students would do it only if it meant moving to a big city, larger than the one they presently live in.

After marriage male student would keep their surname, and female students would take their husbands' surname. This indicates that the Republic of Croatia is a traditional country that preserves old customs. Concerning giving birth male students would like to have their first child between the ages of 27 and 30, while female students would like to have their first child between the ages of 25 and 30. Regarding their provenience and religiousness, students who grew up in villages and smaller cities and consider themselves religious would like to have their first child between the ages of 25 and 27, while respondents who grew up in a city and do not consider themselves religious persons would like to have their first child later between the ages of 27 and 30. Although most of the respondents expressed their wish to have two children, there is a high percentage of those who would like to have three children contrary to non-religious persons. The majority of students think that in the Republic of Croatia, taking into consideration the average wages and state support, it is sufficient to have two children. A very small number of students think that it is possible to have three children in the Republic of Croatia, while all the respondents think that a Croatian family should not include four or more children. In case of pregnancy female students would keep the baby regardless if their partners would like to marry or not and take responsibility for the baby. This is the proof that women have become economically independent, that they do not depend on men so much any more, because they know that they are able to take care of the child as well as of his or her education and provide for the expenses during his or her growing up. In case of their partners' pregnancy male students would marry her and suggest her to have the baby. It seems that the plausibility of myths about the irresponsibility of men has broken down in the 21<sup>st</sup> century confirming that they are ready to be relied upon and provide a financial support for their partner in such a situation. There is a very small percentage of female students would choose to have an abortion in such a situation as well as male students who would suggest to their partners to do so. A higher percentage of non religious respondents are in favour of abortion, and this is because the church and the Christian religion do not approve abortion.

- ❖ Attitudes towards children and family policy do not differ so much regardless respondents' sex, background and religiousness. The majority of respondents do not consider marriage an old-fashioned institution and think that quarrelling about housekeeping is not a good reason to end marriage and they find career less important than marriage and having children. Before getting married and having children they want to resolve their financial independence and residential issues, but they consider cohabitation before marriage a good test for marriage life. Most of them think that children and marriage do not slow down career and that they should not have children because of society's expectations and they enjoy children's company. They also think that frequent quarrelling between partners is not a reason for divorce. Most of them think that it is easier to live with their parents and they postpone taking responsibilities, but on the other hand, they do not agree with the statement that life is difficult even without getting married and having children. Regarding the distribution of sex most of the male students think that marriage and children require sacrifice and female students do not agree with this statement.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This work contains a comparative analysis of family structure and population movements as well as the analysis of survey data.

Comparative analysis has confirmed a cause-consequence relation between family structure and population movement. In fact, the falling rate of concluded marriages, the growth of divorce rate and marriages without children are surely the consequence of birth-rate diminution. Birth-rate diminution in the nineties had an impact on 2001 population decrease. This decrease in comparison to 1991 amounted to 6,6 % or 295.218 inhabitants. The influence of this reduction was evident in 2003 when the natural depopulation reached its peak amounting to 107.954 inhabitants, which was the consequence of the increased mortality rate.

In spite of such a natural depopulation and lower level of the economic development Croatia has reached economically developed countries of Western Europe.

It should be remembered that factors affecting birth-rate (biological, social, economic, cultural, religious and psychological) also affect the family structure. In case of Croatia, one must take into consideration the civil war and the effect of aggression. The unfavourable Croatian population's movement tendencies highlighted in this paper led to the unbalanced young and elderly population structure.

Demographers with good reason announce an even more unfavourable depopulation in the Republic of Croatia. Its negative implications are already felt on the labour market.

Developed European countries reduced this problem by means of immigration of the population during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, contrary to this Croatia was characterised by the emigration process.

This negative demographic process cannot be stopped without a positive migration balance. To reach such a balance, it is necessary to create clear immigration policy of high quality preferably based on the regional development policy. Because of the negative movement of the Croatian population a preliminary survey on student population's attitudes regarding marriage, family and children has been carried out in the second part of this paper.

High percentage of research results indicate students' positive attitudes which are an outcome of their family situation, the place of their residence (city, village) and their religion.

Besides the already mentioned positive attitudes towards marriage, children and family it is worth to note their inclination to marry at a later age, because they associate the achievement of their attitudes with employment, finding a place to live, settling family and business relations. The results of the empirical research point out that marriages and birth-rate are related to economic and social factors, while the psychological factors are not so significant.

In order to achieve a greater number of marriages and higher birth-rate in the Republic of Croatia, according to the research results, it is indispensable to achieve higher levels of the economic growth rate, which is unfortunately possible only in the long-term on account of the present business situation..

## REFERENCES

- Akrap, A. i Čipin, I. (2006): *Socijalitetni sterilitet u Hrvatskoj – zašto smo neoženjeni i neudane*, Ministarstvo obitelji, branitelja i međugeneracijske solidarnosti, Zagreb
- Bogunović, A., Crkvenac, M., Družić I. idr. (1998): *Hrvatsko gospodarstvo*, Ekonomski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu i Politička kultura, Zagreb
- Damjanić, Z. (2007): *Stavovi studentica Ekonomskog fakulteta u Zagrebu prema djeci i obiteljskoj politici*, Ekonomski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb
- Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske (2000): *Priopćenje prirodnog kretanja stanovništva*, dostupno na: <http://www.dzs.hr>
- Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske (2008): *Statistički ljetopis Republike Hrvatske*, dostupno na: [http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv\\_Eng/ljetopis/2008/PDF/00-sadrzaj.pdf](http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/ljetopis/2008/PDF/00-sadrzaj.pdf)

Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske(2008): Žene i muškarci u Republici Hrvatskoj, dostupno na:

[http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv\\_Eng/menandwomen/men\\_and\\_women\\_2008.pdf](http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/menandwomen/men_and_women_2008.pdf)

Fanuko, N. (1997), Sociologija, Školska knjiga, Zagreb

Gelo, J., Akrap, A., Čipin, I. (2005.): Temeljne značajke demografskog razvoja Hrvatske (bilanca 20. stoljeća), Ministarstvo obitelji, branitelja i međugeneracijske solidarnosti, Zagreb

Haralambos, M.i Holborn, M. (2002): Sociologija, (Zagreb: Golden marketing)

Kuvačić, I. (2004): Uvod u sociologiju, Golden marketing, Zagreb

Obiteljski zakon, N.N. br. 116/03, dostupno na:

<http://narodnenovine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/306171.html>

Puljiz, V. (1999), “Profili obiteljske politike“, Revija za socijalnu politiku, 6 (1): 21-33

Puljiz, V. (2002), “Hrvatska obiteljska politika u europskom kontekstu“, Revija za socijalnu politiku, 9 (2): 117-137

Wertheimer-Baletić, A. (1999): Stanovništvo i razvoj, Mate, Zagreb

Žepić, B. (2007), Sociologija, Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, Zagreb

**Table 1. Supplement**  
**Research results on marriage and birth-rate among students grouped according to their sex**

QUESTION	ANSWERS	SEX in %	
		M	F
		%	%
1. How many children did your mother give birth to?	1	15,15	9,64
	2	66,67	60,24
	3	15,15	26,51
	4	3,03	2,41
	Five and more	0	1,20
2. Are your parents divorced or were they divorced?	Yes	3,03	12,05
	No	96,97	87,95
3. Would you like to get married one day?	Yes	90,91	98,80
	No	9,09	1,20
4. What is the appropriate age to enter marriage?	20-23	3,33	1,22
	23-25	3,33	9,76
	25-27	16,67	39,02
	27-30	43,33	39,02
	More than 30	33,33	10,98
5. What kind of ceremony would you like to have?	Religious	56,67	65,85
	Civil	16,67	13,41
	Either way	26,67	20,73
6. After the marriage you would:	Keep your surname	96,67	9,76
	Take husband's / wife's surname	0	51,22
	Keep your own and take your husband's / wife's surname	3,33	39,02
7. Would you be ready to change your permanent	Only if it means moving to a bigger city	50	42,68

address at your partner's request?	Only if it means moving to a village	0	7,32
	I live in a city and I do not want to move	23,33	23,17
	I live in a village and I do not want to move	10	18,29
	I do not want to live in a city	3,33	0
	I do not want to live in a village	10	6,10
	I would move anyway	3,33	2,44
8. Would you like to have children in the future?	Yes	93,94	97,59
	No	6,06	2,41
9. How many children would you like to have?	1	12,90	13,58
	2	54,83	64,20
	3	22,58	20,99
	4	3,23	1,23
	Five and more	3,23	0
	I do not know	3,23	0
10. What is the appropriate age to have children?	20-23	0	1,23
	23-25	6,45	12,35
	25-27	19,35	40,74
	27-30	48,39	40,74
	More than 30	25,81	4,94
11. Concerning the average wage and state support in the Republic of Croatia, what is the ideal number of children for a family?	0	12,18	2,41
	1	36,36	36,15
	2	39,39	54,22
	3	12,12	7,23
	4 and more	0	0
12. What would you do in case of unwanted pregnancy? (question for female respondents only)	Give birth	/	69,88
	Give birth if the partner wants to get married	/	1,20
	Give birth although the partner does not want to get married but wants to take part in its raising	/	0
	Give birth if I have enough financial resources to provide for the baby	/	13,25
	I would give the child for adoption	/	0
	Abort the pregnancy	/	12,05
	I do not know	/	3,61
13. If your partner accidentally gets pregnant, what would you do? (question for male respondents only)	Advise her to give birth and marry her	57,58	/
	Advise her to give birth and would not marry her and take my responsibilities	12,12	/

	Advise her to give birth and take my responsibility in regard to the child but would not marry her	3,03	/
	Advise her to give birth if I do not have the obligation to pay the alimony	3,03	/
	Advise her to give the child for adoption	0	/
	Advise her to abort the pregnancy	12,12	/
	I would not consider it my problem	0	/
	I would not know what to do	12,12	/

Source: Survey, Authors elaboration, November 2008

## OBITELJSKA STRUKTURA I DEMOGRAFSKA SLIKA U REPUBLICI HRVATSKOJ

### SAŽETAK

*Analiza kretanja stanovništva u Republici Hrvatskoj obilježena je depopulacijskim značajkama. One su napose došle do izražaja u razdoblju od 1991. do danas. Ukupnoj je depopulaciji pridonijelo prirodno i mehaničko kretanje stanovništva. Prirodna depopulacija najvećim je dijelom uzrokovana smanjenjem broja sklopljenih brakova, porastom broja razvedenih brakova kao i brakova bez djece. Zbog navedenih negativnih pojava u radu je provedeno empirijsko istraživanje na populaciji studenata zbog utvrđivanja njihovih stavova o braku, obitelji i djeci. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na pozitivne stavove studenata i činjenicu da ti stavovi odražavaju njihovu obiteljsku strukturu i prostor iz kojeg dolaze (grad, selo). Svoje pozitivne stavove vezuju uz kasniju dob stupanja u brak koja je najvećim djelom uvjetovana društveno-gospodarskim čimbenicima.*

**Ključne riječi:** obitelj, brak, depopulacija, stanovništvo