

Article

# The Role of Demographic and Territorial Factors in the Development of the Institution of Marriage

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the demographic and territorial factors influencing the development of the marriage institution. The study examines the population structure, age and gender ratios, as well as territorial differences, specifically the living conditions in urban and rural areas, and their impact on marital processes. The results indicate that these factors have a significant effect on the age at marriage, the number of marriages, and the stability of family relationships.

**Keywords:** Marriage Institution, Demographic Factors, Territorial Factors, Age at Marriage, Population Structure, Gender Ratio, Migration, Urban-Rural Differences, Social Development, Family Stability

## 1. Introduction

The institution of marriage constitutes one of the fundamental social institutions in the development of modern society. It serves not only as the primary mechanism for population reproduction but also as a crucial factor in ensuring social stability. Through marriage, family relationships are formed, generational continuity is maintained, and social values are consistently transmitted from one generation to the next. Therefore, examining the development of the institution of marriage holds significant scientific and practical relevance [1, 2].

In recent years, notable transformations in marriage patterns have been observed across many countries worldwide, including Uzbekistan. In particular, trends such as the increasing age at marriage, the rising number of divorces, and the transformation of family values necessitate a deeper analysis of the factors influencing the institution of marriage [3, 4].

One of the key determinants of the institution of marriage is demographic processes. Unlike other disciplines, demography studies the population and a set of demographic phenomena that characterize the macro-social parameters of marriage. Marriage is defined as the process of forming a spousal union within a population. In demographic analysis, marriage is considered in relation to real or hypothetical cohorts and is established between individuals (men and women) who have reached marriageable age but have not yet entered into marriage, in accordance with legal or traditional norms [5, 6].

## 2. Methodology

According to data from the State Statistics Committee, a total of 267,131 marriages were registered in Uzbekistan in 2025, while the number of divorces reached 46,594. These figures reflect underlying demographic concepts and indicators. In demographic analysis, marriage-related indicators are classified into several groups: indicators describing

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marriage and celibacy across cohorts; measures of overall marriage frequency; indicators determining the age at marriage; widowhood rates; indicators of marital stability and divorce frequency; prevalence of remarriage; and characteristics of partner selection.

Marital status represents an important structural characteristic of the population in demographic analysis, reflecting the state of marriage at a given point in time. Additionally, the concept of marriageable age is typically applied to individuals aged 15–49 when analyzing the duration of marital status.

Research methodology. The analysis integrates three types of official data sources: first, annual administrative-statistical series on marriages and divorces; second, demographic data on total population, urban and rural population distribution, and the number of males; and third, demographic situation reports for the years 2023, 2024, and 2025. These statistics were published by the National Statistics Committee, with primary data sources including the Ministry of Justice for marriage data and both the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs for population and migration data.

The study employs time-series analysis, comparative regional analysis, and structural-demographic interpretation methods. In certain instances, percentage changes and simple ratios were calculated by the author.

Literature review. The evolution of social norms and cultural values has significantly influenced marriage trends. The decline of traditional values and the rise of modernity have reshaped attitudes toward marriage, family, and interpersonal relationships. For example, non-traditional family structures, single-parent households, and various forms of partnership-based unions are increasingly accepted, leading to a redefinition of the concept of marriage. Consequently, “the traditional nuclear family is no longer the sole norm; diversity in family structures is increasingly recognized and accepted.”

### 3. Result and Discussion

In this context, it is important to consider the concepts of cohabitation and cohabitants. Cohabitation refers to a non-registered sexual or partnership union that is not formalized in accordance with marriage legislation.

**Table 1.** classification of such types of marital and quasi-marital unions

Types and Criteria of Marriage	Name of Marriage Type	Definition
Partner selection	Exogamy	A partner is selected exclusively from outside one’s social group.
Size of marriage group	Endogamy	A partner is selected exclusively from within one’s own social group.
	Monogamy	A system in which an individual (male or female) has only one spouse at a given time.
	Polygamy	A marital system that permits an individual to have multiple spouses simultaneously.
	Polygyny	A form of polygamy in which a man has multiple wives.
	Polyandry	A form of polygamy in which a woman has multiple husbands.

In Uzbekistan, civil registry offices (ZAGS/FHDY) record acts of civil status, including the registration of marriages and divorces, through official entries. These civil status records constitute documents of state significance; they are prepared in a single copy and are preserved for a period of 75 years from the date of registration within the civil registry authorities. At the same time, consistent reforms are being implemented to ensure the rights and interests of women and to strengthen the institution of the family [7].

In this regard, the regulatory and legal framework has been substantially improved. In particular, 20 laws regulating family relations, 32 decrees and resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and 45 resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers have been adopted. A system of maintaining individual case records for families in conflict has been introduced, and, in cooperation with the “Oqila ayollar” movement and community structures at the маҳалла (mahalla) level, targeted measures are being undertaken to prevent family breakdown and divorce.

Furthermore, centers for preparing young people for family life have been established. Through these centers, 85.3 thousand individuals were trained in 2022, 87.7 thousand in 2023, and 155.7 thousand in 2024 prior to entering marriage [8].

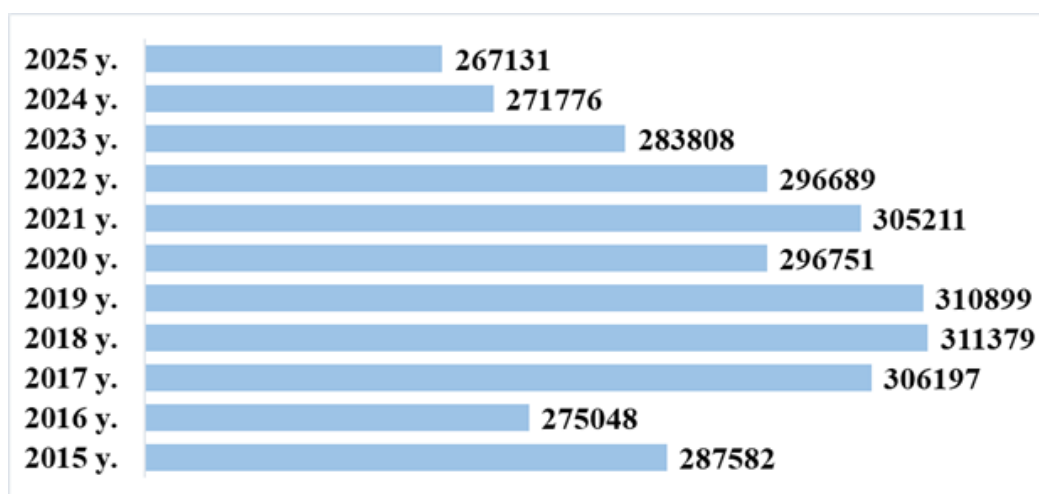
From the perspective of international experience, the case of Azerbaijan indicates that approximately 70–80 thousand marriages are registered annually. Of these, 5–8 percent result in divorce each year, with around 90 percent of such cases attributed to property-related disputes between spouses [9].

According to demographic analyses (Vishnevsky, 2006; Zakharov, 2005, 2018), Russia exhibits characteristics of the “second demographic transition.” This includes an increase in cohabitation, a decline in registered marriages, a reduction in the number of children per family, and a shift toward nuclear family structures. Data from the 2015 microcensus indicate a growing proportion of divorced individuals or those intending to divorce, a decline in the intensity of first marriages, and a broader age distribution of marriage [10].

A study conducted at the University of Buea in Cameroon involved a sample of 124 young individuals aged 18–30, who were administered the Criteria for Marriage Readiness questionnaire. Demographic criteria were identified and analyzed to assess their significance for marriage readiness and future marital satisfaction. The findings revealed that 59.33% of participants considered demographic criteria essential, whereas 40.67% regarded them as insignificant. Additionally, 36.7% of respondents identified these criteria as highly important for future marital satisfaction [11].

In Uzbekistan, 292,286 marriages were registered in 2010. This figure increased in subsequent years, reaching 304,859 in 2013, 306,197 in 2017, and peaking at 311,379 in 2018—the highest level observed during the period under review. Thereafter, a downward trend emerged: 296,689 marriages were recorded in 2022, 283.8 thousand in 2023, 271.8 thousand in 2024, and 267,131 in 2025 [12].

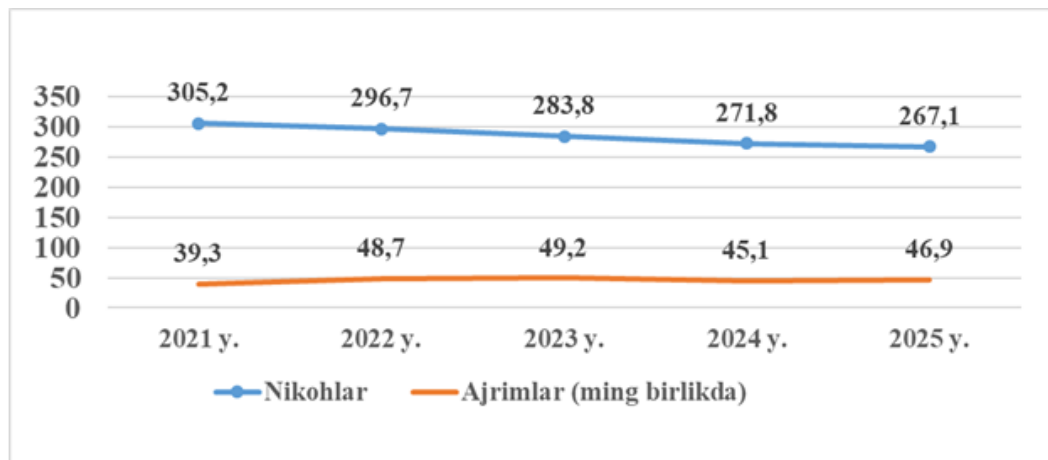
Thus, between 2010 and 2025, the absolute number of marriages declined by approximately 8.6%. Compared to the peak level in 2018, the decrease by 2025 amounted to around 14.2%. This decline reflects not merely short-term fluctuations but a sustained downward trend observed particularly since 2021.



**Figure 1.** Total Number of Registered Marriages in Uzbekistan (absolute figures)

At the same time, it can be observed that the number of divorces increased significantly—from 17,794 cases in 2010 to approximately 46.9 thousand in 2025. In

particular, an analysis of the dynamics of marriages and divorces during the period 2021–2025 reveals a clear trend: the number of marriages declined from 305.2 thousand to 267.1 thousand by 2025, while the number of divorces remained persistently high, fluctuating around 39.3 thousand to 46.9 thousand over the same period.



**Figure 2.** Dynamics of Marriages and Divorces (absolute figures)

### Permanent Population Size and Urban–Rural Structure

Between 2010 and 2025, the permanent population increased from 28.0 million to 37.5 million, representing a growth of approximately 34% (see Table 4). This indicates that, while the number of marriages declined over the same period, the demographic base of individuals with the potential to enter into marriage expanded [13].

Consequently, the decrease in the absolute number of marriages cannot be explained solely by population dynamics such as decline or contraction. On the contrary, despite the expansion of the demographic base, the intensity of marriage has weakened, suggesting the influence of other socio-demographic and behavioral factors.

**Table 2.** Permanent Population Size and Urban–Rural Composition (in thousands)

Year	Total population, thousand	Urban population, thousand	Rural population, thousand
2010	28,001.4	14,425.9	13,575.5
2015	31,022.5	15,748.0	15,274.5
2020	33,905.2	17,144.1	16,761.1
2023	36,024.9	18,370.9	17,654.0
2024	36,799.8	18,771.1	18,028.7
2025	37,543.2	19,139.4	18,403.8

The dynamics of the urban and rural population are also of considerable importance. In 2010, the urban population amounted to 14.4 million, while the rural population stood at 13.6 million; by 2025, these figures had increased to 19.1 million and 18.4 million, respectively. This indicates that, although urbanization is taking place in Uzbekistan, it does not signify the disappearance of rural settlement patterns; rather, both segments continue to grow in absolute terms. Consequently, the rural factor remains significant in the geography of marriages.

According to data for January–December 2025, 49.7% of marriages were registered in urban areas and 50.3% in rural areas. In 2024, the distribution was 50.3% urban and 49.7% rural, while in 2023 it was 49.2% urban and 50.8% rural. Thus, there is no substantial disparity between urban and rural areas in terms of marriage distribution; however, the rural segment has consistently maintained either a slight predominance or at least parity over the years.

A markedly different pattern is observed with respect to divorces. In 2025, 60.1% of divorces occurred in urban areas and 39.9% in rural areas; in 2024, the shares were 62.0% urban and 38.0% rural; and in 2023, 60.7% urban and 39.3% rural. This suggests that while the spatial distribution of marriages is relatively balanced between urban and rural contexts, divorces are significantly more concentrated in urban areas [14].

#### Age and Gender Factors in Marriage

The gender composition of the population is also an important consideration. At the beginning of 2025, the permanent population included 18,904.5 thousand men out of a total population of 37,543.2 thousand, implying approximately 18,638.7 thousand women. This reflects a relatively balanced gender structure, with around 1,014 men per 1,000 women. Therefore, the primary drivers of changes in marriage trends in Uzbekistan are not gender imbalances, but rather factors such as age structure, socio-economic conditions, and territorial characteristics.

At the same time, early marriages represent a demographically significant factor. According to official statistics, 8,223 early marriages were recorded in 2010; this number declined to 5,312 in 2015, 3,001 in 2019, 88 in 2020, 92 in 2021, 74 in 2022, 68 in 2023, and 51 in 2024. This corresponds to an approximate 99% decrease over the period 2010–2024. Thus, the transformation of the institution of marriage is reflected not only in the decline in the number of marriages but also in the strengthening of legal regulations and age standards governing marriage.

**Table 3. Regional Concentration of Marriages and Divorces**

Year	Regions with the Highest Number of Marriages	Regions with the Highest Number of Divorces
2015	Samarkand, Kashkadarya, Fergana, Andijan	Tashkent City, Fergana, Andijan, Samarkand, Tashkent Region
2024	Fergana, Samarkand, Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya	Tashkent City (13.1%), Fergana (10.6%), Andijan (10.6%), Samarkand (10.2%), Tashkent Region (10.1%)
2025	Samarkand, Fergana, Kashkadarya, Tashkent City	—

Over the past decade, the regions of Samarkand, Fergana, and Kashkadarya have consistently ranked among the leaders in terms of the number of registered marriages. This suggests that regions with a large demographic base, a relatively high proportion of young population, and strong family values tend to exhibit higher marriage intensity.

The lowest levels were recorded in the Republic of Karakalpakstan and Tashkent region, where the marriage rate stood at approximately 6.5 per mille. In these areas, regional demographic age structures and traditional marriage patterns play a significant role.

The regional composition of divorces presents a different pattern. In 2024, the largest shares of divorces were recorded in Tashkent City (13.1%), followed by Fergana and Andijan (10.6% each), Samarkand (10.2%), and Tashkent region (10.1%). The 2023 report similarly indicates that urban areas and large regions remain in the highest segment in terms of divorce rates. This trend may be associated with factors such as economic modernization, increased female employment, housing pressures, the pace of urban life, and growing individualization.

According to official data for 2025, 31.7 thousand marriages were registered in Samarkand region, while 28.9 thousand marriages were recorded in both Fergana and Kashkadarya regions. This demonstrates that the regional leadership observed in 2023–2024 continued into 2025, indicating that such patterns are not случайный (random) but rather represent recurring demographic phenomena [15].

The relatively high share of marriages in regions such as Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Samarkand, and Fergana can be explained, on the one hand, by their large population size

and youthful demographic structure, and, on the other hand, by the relatively strong preservation of family norms. In contrast, while the number of marriages in Tashkent City and other urban centers is also high, the proportion of divorces is even higher.

#### External Migration and the Marriage Environment

Migration influences marriage in two principal ways. First, it alters the territorial distribution of marriageable age groups. Second, it may increase the number of families experiencing long-distance or temporary separation. Although the scale of external migration in Uzbekistan is relatively modest compared to the total number of marriages, it can have noticeable social consequences in certain regions. In 2025, 1,159 individuals immigrated to Uzbekistan, while 10,117 emigrated; in 2024, the corresponding figures were 2,229 and 10,842, respectively.

**Table 4.** Official Annual Report on Immigration and Emigration (2025)

Year	Imigrants	Emigrants
2010	4,665	44,420
2015	2,466	31,765
2020	1,105	13,648
2022	2,291	8,790
2023	2,955	17,336
2024	2,229	10,842
2025	1,159	10,117

These figures influence the institution of marriage not so much in quantitative terms as in qualitative dimensions. In particular, in regions characterized by high levels of outward migration, there is a greater likelihood of delayed marriage, temporary spousal separation, the emergence of transnational or distance-based family models, and increased pressure on marital stability. Although official statistics do not explicitly establish a direct causal relationship, such analytical conclusions can be inferred from the regional structure of migration and marriage market indicators.

#### Analysis and Findings

1. **The number of marriages is declining, but not due to population decrease.** Between 2010 and 2025, the permanent population increased from 28.0 million to 37.5 million, while the number of marriages declined from 292,286 to 267.1 thousand. This indicates that the primary driver of change in the institution of marriage is not a contraction of the demographic base. Rather, it can be explained by factors such as a gradual increase in the age at marriage, more cautious partner selection, and the growing influence of economic considerations.
2. **Rural marriages remain strong, while urban divorces are relatively higher.** During 2023–2025, marriages were distributed almost evenly between urban and rural areas, with rural areas showing a slight predominance in some years. However, divorces have consistently been higher in urban areas: 60.7% in 2023, 62.0% in 2024, and 60.1% in 2025. This suggests that although marriage formation is widespread in urban settings, its stability is subject to greater pressures in these environments.
3. **The regional demographic “youth core” determines marriage intensity.** Regions such as Samarkand, Kashkadarya, Fergana, Surkhandarya, and Andijan have consistently ranked in the high segment in terms of marriage rates. Official reports indicate higher shares or coefficients of marriage in these regions. This reflects the strong relationship between the proportion of young population, the persistence of family values, and local marriage practices.
4. **Early marriages have sharply declined—this is a key indicator of institutional modernization.**

The decrease from 8,223 early marriages in 2010 to just 51 in 2024 demonstrates that the institution of marriage has undergone transformation not only in quantitative terms but also in legal and age-related standards. This trend appears to be associated

with increased female educational attainment, stricter regulation of marriage age, and enhanced institutional oversight.

**5. The proportion of divorces reflects internal pressures within the institution of marriage.**

In 2023, the number of divorces amounted to approximately 17.3% of registered marriages; in 2024, 16.6%; and in 2025, 17.6%. While this does not imply that every marriage ends in divorce, it serves as an important indicator of internal stress within the institution, particularly in urban contexts where such pressures are more pronounced.

**4. Discussion**

The case of Uzbekistan demonstrates that the institution of marriage is evolving simultaneously along three key dimensions. First, demographic expansion: the total population continues to grow. Second, a gradual decline in marriage intensity: the number of marriages is not increasing proportionally with demographic growth. Third, territorial differentiation: key marriage indicators remain concentrated in populous and relatively traditional regions, while divorce rates are higher in urban centers.

In this context, it would be analytically insufficient to characterize developments in Uzbekistan simply as a “decline in the number of marriages.” Rather, marriage remains a widespread social institution, but its territorial profile and level of stability are undergoing transformation. This shift has become particularly evident in statistical trends observed since 2021.

**5. Conclusion**

An analysis of official statistics for the period 2010-2025 leads to the following general conclusion: the institution of marriage in Uzbekistan is closely and fundamentally linked to demographic and territorial factors. Population growth has not automatically resulted in an increase in the number of marriages; on the contrary, marriage intensity has declined.

Although marriages are relatively evenly distributed between urban and rural areas, divorces are significantly more prevalent in urban settings. Regions with a strong demographic youth base such as Samarkand, Kashkadarya, Fergana, and Surkhandarya continue to occupy leading positions in the geography of marriages. Meanwhile, the sharp decline in early marriages represents one of the most evident outcomes of institutional modernization.

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