

# **Family formation and reproduction in Buenos Aires, Argentina**

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## Introduction

Argentina has not been alien to the changes produced in family organisation, characteristic of many countries, during the second half of the twentieth century. The available information points at a decrease of legal marriages, increases in conjugal cohabitation, a reduction in the size of households, more divorces, an increase of extramarital births, as well as in reconstituted and uniparental households (particularly with female family heads) and a wider diffusion of safe and efficient contraceptive practices. According to the last four Argentine National Population Census, between 1960 and 1991, consensual unions, separations and divorces increased in an outstanding way, while legal marriages and celibacy decreased (INDEC, 1999; Mazzeo, 1998; Torrado, 2000 and 2001). These changes were accompanied by other socio-demographic phenomena, such as a persistent decrease of fertility, a sustained trend in the ageing of population and an improvement of women's conditions, the latter ones associated with an increase in school attendance and the participation of women in economic activities (Wainerman and Geldstein, 1994).

Due to the influence they exert over demographic and social reproduction, all cultures place their concerns about family formation in a privileged position. The relationship between conjugal unions and reproduction is closely linked with socio-cultural, political and economic factors. This relationship, in turn, expresses the practice of social, religious and cultural norms which are strongly influenced by institutions such as marriage and controlled by the State, and by religious ethics and its ritual forms (Salles, 1998). The historic trends regarding types of families and the time required for changes vary according to groups and populations, modifying the family constitution cycle, its structure and functions. According to Federici (1984), the concept of conjugal union changed deeply in less than a hundred years. A first model was that of a marriage-institution with the double object of guaranteeing survival and reproduction and transmitting the material and symbolic heritage to the family members. The characteristics of this marriage model was to prescribe inflexible rules about duties and responsibilities according to sex and age and to establish precise hierarchies among

family members. Personal emotions played a restricted role and indissolubility of the marriage bond was an unavoidable premise. The second model was that of a marriage-alliance, and it came about when the need to guarantee survival became less urgent and the objective of the couple's happiness emerged, thus reconciling legal aspects with love and personal happiness. The indissolubility of the bond is still in force and divorce becomes more a social than a legal sanction that favours marginality of the ex-spouses and their offspring. The third model, that of a marriage-fusion, unites its members with an exclusively emotional bond. Conjugal indissolubility is not a requisite and divorce is an expected solution when affections diminish. Although social sanctions are lighter, marriage breakdown brings frustration to the couple and their offspring due to the breaking of the bond. Last, the fourth model is that of a marriage-association in which similarity of life styles, tastes and habits predominate.

As this came about, the position destined for women also changed, and it varied in the four models, according to the following dependence degrees: in the first one, the woman is under the tutelage and subjection of the husband-father, in the second one, her role is that of a woman-mother-lover, in the third one, a parity of rights and duties prevails while, in the fourth model, labor demands tend to impose over the social and psychological domains.

Another fundamental contribution towards the understanding of family formation processes is the concept of marriage market. The ways in which young people meet and establish love bonds and the ages in which societies accept and promote these exchanges and alliances show multiple demographic, socio-cultural and historic perspectives (Alabart et al., 1988; Flaquer, 1998; Schoen and Weinick, 1993; Locoh, 1996; Domingo, 1989 y 1997). In this sense, the socially legitimated forms of sexual union prescribe rules about the choice of the spouse, and these are more rigid when the concept of kinship and alliances between families are more elementary (Héritier, 1996). On the other hand, societies with more complex kinship systems develop more flexible mechanisms for finding a couple and, in these cases, the concept of marriage market applies more strictly (Henry, 1969), referring to marriage alliances that stress the interchange between individuals more than between families (Flaquer, 1998).

There are different types of conjugal unions that have been widely described by sociologic, anthropologic and demographic literature. It is not an easy task to capture the conjugal situation of people because it is common to misunderstand the difference

between the civil state that arises from a legal situation and the conjugal state that defines the actual practice of unions. If we add the changes that came about during the last few years, in which very dynamic situations have been built, the picture we obtain tends to become more complex, considering the way in which people marry, live together and separate, or of people who live together get married, and the divorced ones form other couples with or without children. We might ask if these changes in family formation are due to a delay in the marriage rate calendar, caused by the prolonged economic crisis or if they are pointing at more complex processes, in which socio-cultural factors have an effect on the intensity of this phenomenon. How will these changes evolve? Which is the importance attributed by men and women to the support given by a legal marriage, to the role of children in these couples? Does a religious marriage bear an influence over these conceptions?

In Argentina there is scarce knowledge about the processes that lead to family formation. Due to their own objectives and design, Population Census and Households Surveys are not the most adequate sources to study this subject. Also, there are no alternative and complementary sources because there have been no demographic surveys to recover conjugal and reproductive trajectories. But, some historic or qualitative researches have been carried out and, there is also some information contained in socio-demographic studies (Pantelides, 1984; Torrado, 1993, 2000 y 2001; Cicerchia, 1994; Wainerman and Geldstein, 1994; Jelin, 1994; Cacopardo and Moreno, 1996; Mazzeo, 1998; Añaños, 1999). To the scarcity of studies carried out in this field, we must also add that a large number of them are geared to the study of popular sectors, thus reducing the possibility of understanding what happens with the middle socio-economic range, that plays a decisive role in the appearance of new types of cohabitation. One of the purposes of the project "Family formation and reproduction", directed by the author at the University of Buenos Aires, and from which this paper is derived, is to ease this situation. The object of the project is to link recent trends in family formation with reproduction in Argentina, trying to stress the socio-economic and cultural differences and the role of contraception in the dynamics of these processes. The population studied for this project is composed by young men and women from middle socio-economic levels who live in one of the following conjugal situations: 1) consensual unions (cohabitants), 2) bachelors without a couple or with one; in this last case, not living in the same house and 3) married. This last group

constitutes the population studied for this paper, and they were questioned about expectations, practices and opinions about marriage, family and the formation of offspring.

## Methodology

In order to study the married population, a descriptive and exploratory research design was elaborated, that set out more from questions and interrogations than from substantial hypotheses. The studied universe was made up with married men and women, aged between 20 and 34, from middle socio-economic levels, who live in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area and with no less than 12 years of schooling. In order to determine the socio-economic level, the interviewed person's occupational situation was considered (occupational category). If the interviewed person was economically inactive or unemployed, their couple's occupational situation was considered. Previous to the quantitative stage and, in order to explore various issues to be included in the final questionnaire, 20 in depth interviews were carried out. The structured questionnaire consisted of closed, open and scale questions. These were about ways of forming a nuptial couple, religious marriage, ideas about the number of desired offspring, use of contraceptives and opinions about family life.

The size of the sample was 182 cases (90 male and 92 female) and their selection was made by sex and age. The intentional, and not probabilistic, nature of this sample must be emphasised, pointing at the limits of this study's conclusions, since they refer to the sample and not to all the young married people in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area.

## The profile of married men and women

The structure by sex and age reveals a larger concentration of women within those younger than 25 years old (14% against 8%) and, on the contrary, a higher relative weight of men in the group ranging from 30 to 34 years old (58% against 47%). The distribution by sex, age and schooling shows female predominance in the higher range: half of them have finished higher or university studies against a third of men; in the distribution by age, important differences are also evident between both sexes, which increase in the older ones (28 to 34 years). Consistently, the percentage of women who

only have a secondary education (12 years of schooling) does not reach 15% against 36% of men in that situation.

The socio-economic profile indicates that three fourths of the men and that two thirds of the women belong to the middle-low and middle-middle range. This profile changes as age and schooling increase, and therefore, the middle-high range increases notably.

What is the relationship between the surveyed people's schooling and their couples? Do they tend to marry people within their same level (educational homogamy)? (Table 1) Regarding men:

- 1) A little more than a third completed their secondary school (36%) and frequently married (59%) women who had their same educational level; the rest married women with more years of schooling;
- 2) Those who had more advanced but incomplete studies (33%) married less than half the times with people with their same educational status, the rest tended to do it with women with more years of schooling, and
- 3) Graduates (31%) mainly married (61%) women in that same situation and the rest with women with lower educational levels; this could be explained for the cases in which the wives were younger and were still studying.

The situation of female choice regarding their husband's educational level is different:

- 1) Those who have higher education or university diplomas (51%) married half the times with pairs, a fourth part did it with people over their level but with unfinished studies, and the other fourth married men with secondary or lower schooling;
- 2) Those that began but did not finish higher studies (35%) married a little more than half the times with people in their same level or a higher one; and
- 3) The small percentage of women who only had a secondary education (14%) mainly married men with their same or a lower educational level and none of them chose a husband with higher education.

What happens with homogamy regarding the socio-economic level? The occupational levels of both men and women are similar: three fourths of them are employed in what may be defined as middle or low occupational levels: salesmen, office employees with low or middle qualifications, teachers at primary or secondary levels. The other 25% work in more qualified occupations, such as professionals with

more responsibility, higher administrative posts, university teachers. Whom have they married? (Table 2). Men have generally married women with similar profiles or with somewhat lower ones. Women, although in general terms, follow the above mentioned trend show a larger inclination towards marrying men who work in a more qualified occupation. The conclusion that arises from the analysis of this information is that men tend to marry women in their same socio-economic level or with those belonging to a lower one while women do the opposite.

An important aspect to be considered in the study of marriage rates is the religious marriage. A priori, we could expect that people who marry through the church have more conservative opinions than those who only do it through the civil ceremony. As from this idea, information about religious marriage is included in several tables. In order to complete the surveyed people's profile, the population was characterised according to this aspect. The sample shows a high frequency (71%) of religious marriages, notably in the male population over the female one (75% against 67%) and with more schooling (76% of those who had more than 12 years of schooling against 56% of those who only achieved that level). The motives expressed were the couple's religious beliefs (45% male and 55% female), tradition (28% against 23%), personal convictions (25% against 12%). These numbers suggest that women seem to share their opinions with their couple more than men.

A fifth of the surveyed people, those who did not go through a religious marriage, mentioned that the motive for this decision was based on the beliefs of both (44% male and 63% female), on their own convictions (22% against 7%), on the economic situation (9% against 13%) and on different religious beliefs (13% against 10%). As noted in the case of those who had a religious marriage, in this case women think that they share these convictions more than men.

## Marriage and previous cohabitation

### Previous cohabitation

With whom did the surveyed people live before they married their present couple? Three fourths of both women and men lived with their parents, practically in the same proportion. The remaining fourth shows different types of residence, because although men and women predominantly lived with their present couple, living by themselves was more frequent among men. There is also an important difference in the weight that cohabitation, previous to marriage, has among those belonging to the

middle-low and middle-middle socio-economic levels on one hand, and those belonging to the middle-high level, on the other (12% against 26% respectively) and between those who had or had not had a religious marriage (13% against 25%). The average length of time of cohabitation, previous to marriage, was 28 months for both sexes (a little under two and a half years), with a slightly shorter time for women, 2 years, than for men, 34 months (nearly three years). Regarding previous unions of the surveyed couples, 95% of the cases (98% for men and 92% for women) did not have one.

## Marriage

The average age for marriage was 25.8 years old for men and 24.2 years old for women, a difference of one and a half years. The average age for female spouses was 24.5 years old (a year and three months more than male spouses) and 26.9 years old for the male spouses (two and a half years more than female spouses).

The average duration of marriage was 4.2 years for men and 4.4 years for women. The average duration of the engagement was 2.4 years for men and 2.8 years for women.

Which were the main reasons for getting married (answers are not excluding)? (Table 3). Both male and female answers coincide in the ranking of motives: first is love (58% male and 42% female); second is that they wished to be together, that they got on well together (40% and 32%); third is to build a family (23% and 28%); fourth is tradition, the party, the ceremony (9% and 13%); and fifth is pregnancy (8% and 9%), a motive that in women equals to legal and juridical support (9%). This ranking is generally kept in both socio-economic levels (middle and middle low and middle high) as well as in those who married through religious rites, but it alters in the case of those who did not follow that pattern, where the order is as follows: first, to be together (34%); second, for love and to build a family (both options with a 30% preference); third, pregnancy (21%), pointing at the fact that out of 16 who married because of a pregnancy, 11, i.e. two thirds, did it only through a civil ceremony; fourth, for legal and juridical support (17%); and fifth, tradition and for their children's welfare (8% each).

Why do you think that people marry legally (answers are not excluding)? Men (63%) and women (58%) agree in that these are practices carried out because of habits and tradition in the first place; second, because it grants legal and juridical support (30% and 26%); and third, for the children's welfare (11% and 19%). The last item marks an

interesting difference by sex, because a fifth of the female answers pointed at their children's welfare.

When asked about the main advantages and disadvantages of marriage, the answers were as follows (Tables 4 and 5):

Advantages: men ranked their answers in the following order: security for their children (19%); sharing projects (17%); no advantage (16%); more commitment (13%), and safety (12%).

Women's answers rank differently from men's in the first place, but they coincide in all the other items: legal support (25%); sharing projects (17%); none (16%); more commitment (16%); and safety (12%). For women, is legal support equivalent to what security for their children is for men? It seems that the former also protects women and that the latter one only applies to children. Some interesting questions may arise from this argument.

Disadvantages: both for men and women, the largest number of answers showed there were no disadvantages (52% and 42%). But, for the rest of the items, there is no agreement, and men think that the disadvantages are: less freedom (14%); marriage makes a breakdown more difficult (13%); falling into a routine (7%); and the fifth one, both for men and women, is more responsibility (6%). As a contrast, women mentioned falling into a routine in the second place (17%); in the third place, less freedom (13%); and in the fourth place, that marriage makes a breakdown more difficult (13%).

Where did they meet? It seems that the places where the couples met for the first time differ according to sex, socio-economic level and religious marriage. The five more frequent situations were:

According to sex:

- 1) for men: in a cafeteria or a party (26%); through friends or family (23%); at work (19%); in educational ambits (12%); and during a trip or on holidays (8%).
- 2) For women: through friends or family (32%); in a cafeteria or a party (22%), at work (15%); in educational ambits and in the neighborhood (in both cases 9% respectively).

According to socio-economic level:

- 1) in middle and middle-low levels: in a cafeteria or a party (26%), through friends or family (26%), at work (15%), in the neighborhood (10%), in educational ambits (8%);



2) in middle-high level: through friends or family (31%), at work (21%), in educational ambits (17%), in a cafeteria or a party (14%) .

Last, those who married at church and those who did not met, respectively, through friends or family (31% against 19%), in a cafeteria or a party (23% against 25%), at work (16% against 19%), in educational ambits (9% against 15%), in the neighborhood (6% against 10%).

#### Images about the best age to get married

Which is the best age for men and women to get married? What do men and women think about this? Their opinions are classified according to sex, socio-economic level and religious marriage:

1) Best age for men to get married: both men and women agree that the best age is the interval between 26 and 28 years old (31%) and more than half is concentrated in the interval 26 to 31 years old. This option also prevails among those who had a religious marriage and those belonging to the middle-high level, while those belonging to the middle and low levels account for half of the distribution between 23 and 28 years old. The distinctive aspect for those who did not have a religious marriage is that preferences are distributed among all age levels, with 40% among 26 and 31 years old. The high percentage (20%) of those who answer “it depends on the person’s maturity, there is no definite age for marriage” must not be overlooked. Nevertheless, a relatively late pattern in the preference for the most adequate age for marriage is evident, as well as an acceptance of this pattern in the life cycle of the young people interviewed.

Best age for women to get married: both men and women think that the best age ranges from 23 to 25 years old (33% male and 29% female) and nearly 60% concentrates between 23 and 28 years old. The same pattern is valid for those who had a religious marriage and those belonging to the middle-low and middle levels, while those belonging to the middle-high level extend their preference to over 29 years old; this could be explained because the higher educational and occupational levels of women in this social group might be postponing the beginning of their conjugal life. The same as in the case of men, the answer “it depends on the person’s maturity, there is no definite age for marriage” represents 20% .

## Marriage and reproduction

### Ideal descendants

Interviewed people were asked how many children they would like to have in an ideal situation, independently from the fact that they had or did not have children. The highest percentage (mode) of the distribution was 3 children, independently from sex, age, socio-economic level or religious marriage (except for those under 25 years old, who answered 2 children). Only one interviewed male answered that he had no intention of having children and none wanted to have only one child. The ideal average of children also showed a very limited range, 3.1 among the younger ones, 3.2 among women, among those over 30 years old and those belonging to the lower socio-economic level, and 3.3 among men, among those ranging from 25 to 29 years old and among those who were better off. The number of imagined children, far from numerous or very small homes, is consistent with the preference for 2 to 3 descendants which has prevailed in Argentina for the last 70 years, particularly in middle population sectors. As a contrast, a research carried out among the more deprived population sectors in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area, showed preferences for a larger number of children (López, 1997 y 1998).

### Actual descendants

Two thirds of those interviewed (male and female) have children with their present couple (only 2 out of the 182 have children from other unions and 96% of their spouses are in the same situation).

The average of children alive at birth is similar for men (1.0) and women (1.1) and this number is the same whether they had or had not a religious marriage. But, the socio-economic level seems to influence on this situation: while in the middle-high level, the average is 0.7 children alive at birth and those who are childless represent 47%, in the middle-middle and middle-low levels the average is 1.2 children and those who are childless do not exceed 30% .

In order to appreciate the imagined size of the family, interviewed people with children were asked if they intended to have more children and, in that case, how many. 69 out of the 119 persons in this situation (58%) answered yes: 64% male and 52% female. The differences may be attributed to the higher frequency of men (41%) over women (32%) with only one child and, on the contrary, to more women than men with 2 and 3 children. Data also shows that 6 out of every 10 men want to have another child

and 3 out of every 10, two more children. As an average, fathers would like to have 1.5 more children which, added to those they have (1.0), adds up to 2.5 children; women, on the other hand, would like to add 1.7 children to their families (1.1), adding up to 2.8 children. This expresses the imagined size of descendants among people who have already begun to build a family. In this respect, it is important to note that the global rate of fertility among women in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area in recent years has been under these numbers (1.8 for the City of Buenos Aires and 2.7 for the Metropolitan Area).

Data according to religious marriage points out an interesting aspect. Two thirds of those who did not have a religious marriage, and who represent a little more than a fourth of the interviewed people, want to have only one more child, moving from 0.7 to 1.7 children, which is the global fertility rate in the City of Buenos Aires. Those who are not so well off are distributed along a larger range of options, but always within moderate values.

#### Images about the best age to start parenthood

Which is the best age for men and women to become fathers and mothers? What do men and women think about this? Following are their opinions according to sex, socio-economic level and religious marriage:

1) Best age to start fatherhood: only 20% of men think that under 26 years old is the age to start fatherhood and a third of them prefers 26 to 28 years old, which means that more than half is concentrated between 23 and 28 years old; regarding women, 36% think that the best age is from 29 to 31 years old. The men's pattern repeats itself in the middle-low and middle-middle socio-economic levels, and that of women in the middle-high level. The interpretation of this information could be based on the time required to consolidate a more favourable economic situation to start fatherhood. 60% of those who had a religious marriage place the best ages between 26 and 31 years old; those who have not had a religious marriage place it between 23 and 28 years old. 16% think that "it depends on the person's maturity, there is no definite age for marriage". But, this is evidently a relatively late pattern in the age preference to start fatherhood, particularly for women, that follows the same trend as the one for the marriage age.

2) Best age to start motherhood: 35% of women think that the best age ranges from 26 to 28 years old (30% of men) and 24% concentrates between 23 and 25 years old (30% of men). Women extend their options to older ages, men think that earlier is better. The

pattern according to socio-economic level follows the trend described for fatherhood: the higher the level, an older age for motherhood, and the opposite rules for the middle and middle-low sectors. Those who had a religious marriage prefer earlier motherhood. The answer “it depends on the person’s maturity, there is no definite age for marriage” reaches 16%.

#### Faithfulness in marriage

Do you consider faithfulness is absolutely necessary for the couple, that its members can be tolerant or is it more convenient to have ample freedom in this respect?

Facing this range of options, the opinions of the interviewed people are the following: three quarters of men and 85% of women consider that faithfulness is fundamental for a married couple. As observed in other matters, belonging to different socio-economic levels conditions the answers. Those who are better off show less support to faithfulness than those in lower levels (71% against 81%, respectively); they react in the same sense as those who did not have a religious marriage when compared with those who did (74% against 81%); and 16% of men and 9% of women consider that one may be tolerant regarding faithfulness. 11% of men and 3% of women said that there should be ample mutual freedom; these opinions are supported by those belonging to higher socio-economic levels and by those who did not have a religious marriage.

The results of a study on cohabitation of young people, show that the length of time of cohabitation had no influence on the appreciation of faithfulness but that it did on the intention of marriage: those who expressed that intention pointed out that faithfulness is very important but, those who did not agree show a stronger trend towards tolerance (López, Findling y Federico, 2000a y b).

#### Contraceptive practices

80% of men and 77% of women used some kind of contraceptive at the time of the survey, pointing at a strong control over reproduction. There are no differences according to socio-economic level or religious marriage. Age, on the other hand, plays an important role, since those over 25 years old show a larger prevalence in the use of contraceptives and the percentage lowers to 70% in those under that age. The reasons given for not using contraceptives at present are: pregnancy (women or men's spouses) or because they want to become pregnant. Men use condoms(61%), pills (21%), IUD (14%), rhythm (6%), withdrawal (3%). The only case of feminine sterilization is that of

a the spouse of a male aged 30-34. Women use condoms (45%), IUD (24%), pills (20%), rhythm (10%), withdrawal (6%). Pills are more frequently used by the younger ones and the use of IUD increases with age. As an indication, due to the small number of cases, rhythm and withdrawal are preferably used by the lowest socio-economic level and condoms by those who are better off. Rhythm is used by those who married through the church. When asked "what would you do if you (or your couple) became pregnant?", the answers were: I would have it (male 98%, female 91%).

#### Opinions about family formation and relationship between generations

A series of sentences was shown to the surveyed people in order to establish their agreement or disagreement. They are listed following the order of favourable answers:

- 1) the majority of men (81%) and women (82%) agree that "it is desirable for a couple to have children". Religious marriage weighs positively on this agreement (85% against 72% of those who did not have a religious marriage);
- 2) the agreement is somewhat lower, but still a majority, for the sentence "if one of the members of the couple wishes to have children and the other doesn't, it would be desirable not to have them". Men agree more (68%) than women (50%), and there are no differences whether there was a religious marriage or not;
- 3) "it is better not to have children immediately after getting married" reaches near two thirds of agreement (a little higher in women than in men) with no differences according to religious marriage;
- 4) women agree more than men (60% against 52%) and those who did not have a religious marriage more than those who did (66% against 52%) with the sentence "to live together before marriage is a good trial for the couple" (surveyed women had more previous experience of cohabitation before marriage than men);
- 5) half of the surveyed people of both sexes think that "marriage is for life" and a third disagrees. These opinions are influenced by religious marriage or not (60% against 25%);
- 6) 46% of men (and the same percentage disagree) against 22% of women (two thirds of them disagree) has a favourable opinion on "divorce must be avoided when you have children", and there are no differences according to religious marriage. The difference between men and women is somewhat unexpected and its meaning should be further studied;
- 7) only a third of men and women think that "being married makes breakdown more

difficult”, pointing at less agreement of those who did not have a religious marriage (23%); and

8) there is a definite difference between the opinions of men (20% agree and 70% disagree) and women (33% agree and 50% disagree) about the sentence “children do not strengthen the couple’s relationship”. Should we interpret that men’s opinions are more conservative than women’s?

In order to complete the information about opinions, following are the answers given by the surveyed population about the relationship between their views about life and their parents’ ones. Half the men and two thirds of the women say they are very near or quite near them, and the rest (50% male and 38% female) perceive them as different or very different. The distribution remains unaltered according to socio-economic level, but it differs when considering religious marriage: two thirds of those who had a religious one consider themselves near or very near their parents’ views, while nearly 60% of those who didn’t point at generation differences, thus strengthening in the latter the same trend to accept less the predominant rules as has been pointed out in the different issues studied in this work.

#### Final comments

The object of this work was to learn about different aspects of the formation of marriages in young people of both sexes. The images about the formation of couples, families and descendants that arise from this research are strongly influenced by socio-demographic attributes such as sex, age, socio-economic level and religious marriage. As previously stated, the way in which couples met are related to their socio-economic level; in the higher one labor and educational ambits prevail, while in the lower ones, it is the neighborhood. An interesting finding, that rules over differences according to sex and socio-economic situation, is the coincidence about the size of desirable descendants and that of ages for marriage and parenthood. This shows a relatively late pattern in the preference for the most adequate age for marriage and procreation and the definite practice of this pattern in the interviewed young people's life cycle.

Are there any differences between male and feminine conjugality? What do men and women expect from the conjugal union and from their families? The contrasts in opinions are pointed out in this work. What do women transmit in their answers?

Regarding the advantages of marriage, women point at legal support and their children's welfare. Also, a stronger trend to stick to the more traditional practices and values is

found in religious marriages and in opinions about faithfulness: they choose a religious marriage because of shared beliefs, of habits and traditions linked to ritual aspects, and faithfulness is a strongly supported value.

What do men transmit? Most of them think that most people get married because of tradition and they think that the advantages of marriage mean security for children (women do not think so). If they marry through a religious rite, it is because of their personal convictions and, they don't think that faithfulness is as fundamental as their couples do.

Although the reduced size of this survey forces us to be cautious about interpretations, we can point out that those who chose a religious marriage are quite apart from those in the young middle sector who chose cohabitation as a way of living together (the former have more frequently lived with their parents before marriage, they don't have a previous conjugal experience and they assign a smaller weight to faithfulness and to legal aspects (López, Findling and Federico, 2000 a and b).

Young married people of both sexes seem to discard the traditional marriage model: although most of them married through some religious ceremony, the number of children they would like to have is moderate and the majority of them uses methods to regulate fertility. Why then, is this fertility rate not similar to the European one? Roussel (1992) inquires about the causes of the low Spanish fertility which is accompanied by a relatively low frequency of consensual unions. He thinks that the new behavioral regulators are collective methods among which one can choose with larger margins of freedom. We could venture a similar interpretation by saying that in spite of the advances of women in education, their participation in economic activities, feminist ideas, the massive use of modern contraceptives, as well as divorce and family legislation, the ideals about a family that young married people, belonging to middle sectors in Buenos Aires have, has not gone through notable transformations.

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Table 1. Married population. Distribution by education according to the spouse's sex and education. Percentages.

EDUCACIÓN	SPOUSE'S EDUCATION							
	MALE				FEMALE			
	Sec. level	Incompl. Univ.	Compl. Univ.	Total	Sec. level	Incompl. Univ.	Compl. Univ.	Total
Sec. level	59,4	25,0	15,6	100,0 (32)	61,5	38,5		100,0 (13)
Incompl. Univ.	20,0	43,3	36,7	100,0 (30)	43,7	28,1	28,1	100,0 (32)
Compl. Univ.	14,3	25,0	60,7	100,0 (28)	23,4	23,4	53,2	100,0 (47)
Total	32,2 (29)	27,8 (28)	36,7 (33)	100,0 (90)	35,9 (33)	27,2 (25)	36,9 (34)	100,0 (92)

Table 2. Married population. Distribution by sex and occupation according to the spouse's sex and occupation. Percentages.

	SPOUSE'S OCCUPATION					
	MALE			FEMALE		
	3 to 5	6 and 7	Total	3 to 5	6 and 7	Total
3 to 5	87,3	12,7	73,3 (63)	67,1	32,9	76,9
6 and 7	52,2	47,8	26,7 (23)	52,4	47,6	23,1
Total	(67)	(19)	(86)	(58)	(33)	(91)

Categories:

3 to 5: salesmen, office employment and teachers.

6 to 7: professionals, high administrative employees, university teachers.

Table 3. Main reason to get married (in percentages).

REASONS	SEX		SOCIOECONOMIC LEVEL		RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE	
	MALE	FEMALE	ML/ M	MH	YES	NO
FIRST PLACE	Love 57,8	Love 42,4	Love 49,2	Love 51,7	Love 58,1	To be together/ they get on well together 34,0
SECOND PLACE	To be together/ they get on well together 40,0	To be together/ they get on well together 31,5	To be together/ they get on well together 37,1	To be together/ they get on well together 32,8	To be together/ they get on well together 36,4	Love Build a family 30,2
THIRD PLACE	Build a family 23,3	Build a family 28,3	Build a family 25,0	Build a family 27,6	Build a family 24,0	Pregnancy 20,8
FOURTH PLACE	Tradition / party/ ceremony 8,9	Tradition / party/ ceremony 13,0	Pregnancy 12,1	Tradition / party/ ceremony 17,2	Tradition / party/ ceremony 12,4	Legal support 17,0
FIFTH PLACE	Pregnancy 7,8	Legal support Pregnancy 9,8	Tradition / party/ ceremony 8,1	Legal support 13,8	Too long engagement 9,3	Tradition / party/ ceremony Benefit for children 7,5

Table 4. Main advantages of marriage by sex, socio-economic level and religious marriage.

ADVANTAGES	SEX		SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL		RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE	
	MALE	FEMALE	ML/ M	MH	YES	NO
FIRST PLACE	Security for children 19 %	Legal support 25 %	Legal support 19 %	Sharing projects 19 %	Sharing projects 20 %	Legal support 19 %
SECOND PLACE	Sharing projects 17 %	Sharing projects 17 %	Sharing projects 16 %	Security for children 19 %	Legal support 17 %	More commitment 17 %
THIRD PLACE	None 16 %	None 16 %	None 17 %	More commitment 17 %	None 17 %	Security for children 15 %
FOURTH PLACE	More commitment 13 %	More commitment 16 %	Security for children 15 %	None 14 %	Security for children 16 %	None 13 %
FIFTH PLACE	Safety 12 %	Safety 13 %	More commitment 14 %	Safety 14 %	More commitment 14% Economic safety 12 %	Safety 13 %

Table 5. Which are the main disadvantages of marriage?

DISADVANTAGES	SEX		SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL		RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE	
	MALE	FEMALE	ML/ M	MH	YES	NO
FIRST PLACE	None 52 %	None 42 %	None 50 %	None 41 %	None 45 %	None 53 %
SECOND PLACE	Less freedom 14 %	Routine 17 %	Less freedom 14 %	Routine 19 %	Routine 16 %	Breakdown is more difficult 15 %
THIRD PLACE	Breakdown is more difficult 13 %	Less freedom 13 %	Breakdown is more difficult 11 %	Breakdown is more difficult 17 %	Less freedom 15 %	Less freedom 11 %
FOURTH PLACE	Routine 7 %	Breakdown is more difficult 13 %	Routine 9 %	Less freedom 14 %	Breakdown is more difficult 12 %	
FIFTH PLACE	More responsibility 6%	More responsibility 5 %	More responsibility 8 %			

Summary table. Married population indicators according to different characteristics (percentages).

	SEX		SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL		RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE	
	MALE	FEMALE	ML/ M	MH	YES	NO
Average age at marriage	25,8	24,2	24,3	26,6	25,0	25,0
Standard deviation	3,3	3,3	3,3	3,1	3,3	3,7
Average age of spouse at marriage	24,5	26,9	25,0	27,4	25,7	25,8
Standard deviation	3,4	4,3	4,1	3,5	3,4	5,3
Average duration of union (in months)	50,3	53,1	54,5	45,8	52,0	51,1
Standard deviation	34,4	40,5	38,1	35,8	38,1	38,6
Time of engagement with spouse (in months)	41,3	45,2	42,4	45,1	47,3	33,4
Standard deviation	32,0	32,7	31,9	33,3	33,5	27,0
Percentage of married people who cohabited with present spouse (n = 30)	13,3	19,6	12,1	25,9	13,2	24,5
Percentage of married people through religious rites	66,7	75,0	70,2	72,4		
Present use of contraceptive methods	80,0	77,2	78,2	79,3	77,5	81,1



### Opinion about family formation (agreements) according to sex and religious marriage

