

Period–Cohort Analysis of Marriage Survival and Divorce Indicators in Iran, Fars Province, and Shiraz County (2013–2022): A Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

Marital stability is a salient indicator of family health and social cohesion. In recent decades, major changes in family structure and marital relations have emerged not only in Iran but globally.¹ Rising divorce rates, shrinking household sizes, and the increase in single-parent families reflect the pressures of modernization and evolving social norms.² Over the past 50 years, major shifts in family size, the growth of single-parent households, and the reduction of multi-generational living—alongside expanded female education, urban migration, and labor-market changes—have redefined traditional gender roles and the decision-making structure within families.³ Comparative research confirmed that these global transformations vary in intensity and trajectory according to local cultural and economic contexts.⁴ The aim of this study was to conduct the first comparative period–cohort analysis examining marital survival across Iran, Fars Province, and Shiraz County (2013–2022), highlighting the significance of regional differences and their demographic and public-health implications. These regional variations demonstrated how local sociocultural and economic contexts could shape early marital stability and, indirectly, family mental-health outcomes.

The data were extracted from the annual statistical yearbooks of the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI). Aggregated numbers of marriages and subsequent divorces by cohort year (2013–2022) were used to estimate 1-4 year marital survival rates using the standard survival formula. A period cohort design was employed to compare national, provincial (Fars), and county (Shiraz) levels.

Regional differences in marital survivorship percentages (0–100) were examined using analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Bonferroni adjustment within a period-cohort framework.

The total number of couples was 77,4513 nationally, 47,107 in Fars province, and 14,861 in Shiraz. At all-time intervals, Shiraz and Fars exhibited higher marital survival than the national average. By the 4th year, 92.4% of marriages in Fars and 93.1% in Shiraz were sustained, compared with 90.4% nationally. This absolute gap of almost 2 percentage points is not only statistically significant ($P < 0.001$) but also demographically significant. The difference between Fars and Shiraz declined after the 2th year and became non-significant by the 4th year ($P = 0.110$), indicating relative regional convergence and suggesting a cohesive social fabric inferred from this statistical resilience.

These findings merit deeper interpretation within the demographic transition framework. Several key factors appeared to underlie the stronger marital resilience observed in Fars and Shiraz:

- Enduring kinship networks and social cohesion, which continue to protect marriages and remain less eroded than in other regions.
- Active premarital education and counseling initiatives—such as the locally implemented “Bahare Nekoo” project—enhanced emotional literacy and conflict-resolution skills.
- Community values still aligned with traditional marital norms, reducing recourse to divorce as an immediate solution to marital strain.

According to the Second Demographic Transition framework, rising education, female labor participation, and growing individualism weaken marital stability by shifting family norms toward self-fulfillment rather than collective cohesion.³ Nonetheless, findings from Fars and Shiraz suggest that such global influences are buffered by enduring kinship networks and culturally rooted marital norms. Comparable trends appear across Iran, where—despite similar exposure to modernization—family structures remain largely collectivist and supported by intergenerational bonds and shared cultural–religious values that sustain marital resilience.¹ Together, these insights indicate that while second

demographic transition (SDT) factors may predict rising fragility in marriage, local sociocultural systems in Iran continue to offset these effects through community solidarity and cultural compatibility.

This study suggested several policy implications. First, regional family-health monitoring systems should be developed, and marriage-survival indicators should be published to identify resilient and vulnerable zones. Second, local initiatives such as those in Fars and Shiraz should be replicated and adapted, with expanded pre-marital training and consistent community support for young couples. Third, targeted psychosocial and socio-economic support should be implemented for newlyweds during the early marital years, when the risk of dissolution increases. Finally, detailed qualitative research is required to verify how education level, employment status, social class, and kinship networks shape marital endurance.

This cohort analysis provided strong evidence of sustained marital survival in Fars and Shiraz compared with the national mean. The observed regional resilience corresponded with prior demographic and sociological evidence emphasizing the stabilizing influence of cohesive cultural contexts in Iran and similar societies. These results underscored the urgency of recognizing local mechanisms, designing demographic policies grounded in cultural realities, and reinforcing early marital support. From a public health and family medicine perspective, sustaining early marital stability promotes family mental health, emotional resilience, and collective social wellbeing, emphasizing the need for integrated psychosocial policies to reinforce early marital endurance. This letter presented the first regional period-cohort comparison of marital survival in Iran, revealing how cultural and social factors contribute to local demographic resilience.

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Authors' Contribution

SZ.B: Conceptualization, data collection, statistical analysis, and drafting; A.P: Study design, and reviewing the manuscript; K.J: Data interpretation, sociological framework advice and reviewing the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

AI Declaration

The authors used EditMyEnglish.com for language polishing. All intellectual content, data analysis, and interpretations were solely developed by the authors.

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

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