

A **marriage** is the act, ceremony or process by which the legal relationship between two persons is formed. The legality of the union may be established by civil, religious or other means as recognised by the laws of each country.

In all [European Union \(EU\)](#) and other European countries, contracting a **civil marriage** (before official authorities and on a legal basis) is possible. However, the relation between a civil marriage and a **religious marriage** (before religious representative only) is not the same in all countries. In 15 countries (Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden as well as Norway and the United Kingdom) a religious marriage has consequences for the civil marriage in the sense that a religious marriage is recognised by the state as being equivalent to a civil marriage. France states that a religious marriage has no consequences for marital status, unless it has been contracted abroad.

The **crude marriage rate** is the ratio of the number of marriages during the year to the average population in that year. The value is expressed per 1 000 inhabitants.

Further information

- [Marriage and divorce](#) (ESMS metadata file — demo_nup_esms)
- [Methodology for the calculation of Eurostat's demographic indicators](#) (Publication, authors G. Calot and J.P. Sardon)

Related concepts

- [Divorce](#)

Statistical data

- [Marriage and divorce statistics](#)