

# Divorce, indicator of social and family transformation with differential impact between sexes: study under taken in Nuevo Leon

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## *Resumen*

El documento muestra un análisis del divorcio como fenómeno social y familiar, centrándose en los principales efectos observados y su impacto diferencial en hombres y mujeres. Para el análisis se retomaron los principales datos de un estudio sobre divorcio realizado en Nuevo León, cuyas características según la teoría de la transición demográfica, constituyen un indicador de la transformación social y familiar observada en las últimas décadas. El análisis se fundamenta en la teoría de estructuración y *praxis* social planteada por Giddens (1984), y profundiza en los recursos (autoritarios y distributivos) mostrados por los grupos, así como su relación con el impacto observado tras el divorcio. Además, se revisan los niveles de autonomía y bienestar registrados por las mujeres, quienes se responsabilizan de los hijos.

*Palabras clave:* Divorcio, transformación familiar, efectos, bienestar.

## *Abstract*

*Divorce, indicator of social and family transformation with differential impact between sexes: study under taken in Nuevo Leon*

This document presents an analysis of divorce as a social and family phenomenon, centered on the main effects observed and their differential impact in men and women. For the analysis, the principal data from a study of divorce undertaken in Nuevo León was utilized. This data's characteristics, according to demographic transition theory, constitute an indicator of the social and family transformation observed in recent decades. The analysis was based on the Theory of Social Structuration and Praxis proposed by Giddens (1984) and deepens in the resources (authoritarian and distributive) indicated by the groups, as well as their relation to the impact observed after divorce. In addition, the levels of autonomy and well-being observed among the women responsible for raising children were examined.

*Key words:* Divorce, effects, autonomy and well-being.

## INTRODUCTION

**I**n Mexico, divorce is officially defined as the definitive juridical dissolution of a marriage, becoming the separation of the couple, which confers the parties the right to marry again under the civil disposition according to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2006). From the sociological perspective, divorce is a social and demographic phenomenon characterized by the increase in wedlock breaks; particularly the legal formalization of marital dissolution.

However, it is necessary to analyze such phenomenon in its dual dimension, from which the macro-social approach is associated with the social and demographic transformation called “demographic transition”, especially in its second stage, characterized by changes in the formation and annulment of the wedlock (Ariza and Oliveira, 2004; Arriagada, 2005; Quilodrán, 2003). Such transition is related among other factors with the increase in the population schooling, as well as with changes at the familial level, especially those linked to the role of women and children, such as the incorporation of the former to the labor market (in particular those united and with children), the centrality of familial life as a couple, better valuation and attention for children, longer years of dependences of them (from the extension of schooling) and the increase in the duration of marriages (increase in life expectancy) (Ariza and Oliveira, 2002; Giddens, 2001; Leñero, 2002; Ripol, 2001; Salles and Tuirán, 1996).

At microsocial level, divorce is a process of family breaking and transformation, characterized by its heterogeneity, which mainly implies the formation of reconstructed and single-parent families<sup>1</sup> (INEGI, 2000; Poxtan, 2010). Moreover, it is an indicator of tensions, ambivalences and inequality inside the couples, as well as the expectation changes on marriage.

Owing to the above, the present analysis there is a revision of divorce first at the macrosocial level, pointing out its tendencies both at national and state (Nuevo Leon) levels; then, the analysis is made at microsocial level with a revision of its most relevant characteristics. Later on, the main results of an ample study on this social phenomenon are reviewed in view of analyzing the characteristics of divorce as well as the social factors as-

<sup>1</sup> Single-parent family comprises a single man or a woman in charge of one or various dependent children (Alberdi, 1988; Borrajo, 1988; Rodriguez and Luengo, 2003 cited by Poxtan, 2010). It is worth mentioning that divorce, as of recent decades, has become the source of this sort of families, only surpassed by widowhood, which is still the first source.

sociated to its increase and the effects faced later. A stratified sample of 779 participants was utilized, it comprised 322 men and 457 women who at least have divorced once.

The analysis of results, particularly the effects and implications of divorce, is carried out from Giddens' structuration theory and social praxis, whose proposal enables understanding the relation between the structural elements that define the relation between sexes in society, which on the one side, constrain action, mainly women's, and on the other explain the transformation of the situation and its circumstances, product of actions and social practices, which is linked to the power of the agents derived from their control of resources, in particular those authoritative in nature, related to liberty and decision making. From this statement, it is necessary to analyze the differences evinced in the effects and implications observed among the participants in function of their situation and control of resources both authoritative and distributive.

## **DIVORCE AS A SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC PHENOMENON**

Divorce is linked to the increase in cohabitation or free union,<sup>2</sup> since it is one of the main indicators of demographic transition, specifically changes in formation and dissolution of families, both in the number of separations and divorces and in the diminution of marriages, linked to the increase of the age at marriage and of postponement of maternity (Ariza and Oliveira, 2004; Ripol, 2001; Salles and Tuirán, 1996). Therefore, it demands the analysis of the increase in wedlock breaks associated to the diminution of marriages; this is possible by means of the rate of divorces by hundred marriages. This rate gives a precise account of this transformation, while the typical measurement offered by divorce rate only allows observing the number of divorces over a year in relation to the population of the zone. However, such indicator is the result of the combination between the increase of wedlock breaks and the diminution of registered marriages, at once with the increase in consensual unions, a situation that has been previously reported by a number of authors (García and Rojas, 2004; Quilodrán, 2003; Ribeiro, 2012).

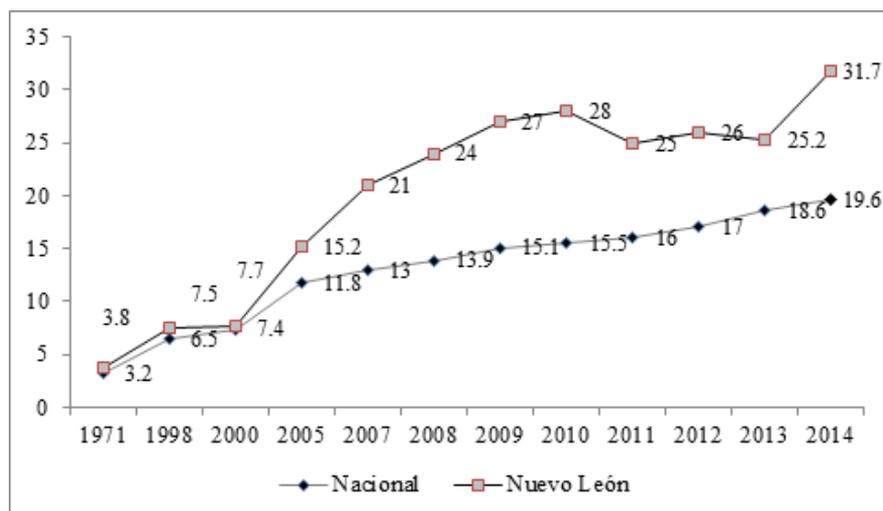
From the theory of "demographic transition", the current characteristics allow making a recount of the advances in the process of evolution and social change, a situation expected in the homologation of societies in the

<sup>2</sup> Cohabitation or free union makes reference to the fact that couples decide to live together without marrying; it may be permanent or temporary.

project of modernity, as they are similar to those considered advanced, it is necessary to mention that the situation in Mexico does not reach yet the levels displayed by countries such as Belgium, Portugal, Hungary, Czech Republic and Spain, and even those observed in Cuba, the United States, Alaska and French Guiana, which are over 50 percent of registered marriages (EUROSTAT, 2012). From these results it can be pointed out that divorce shows an ascending behavior in Mexico, which doubles between 2000 and 2010, being more stressed in the case of Nuevo Leon, as it triplicated over the same period, with 26 divorced by 100 marriages in 2012 (see graph 1), and it hold the fourth national place, after Mexico City (34 out of 100 marriages), Chihuahua (31) and Colima (29) (INEGI, 2011 and 2014). The states with the lower divorce rate are Oaxaca (four), Guerrero (seven) and Chiapas (nine) (INEGI, 2014). However, the situation differs when observing the number of divorces registered over 2012, Nuevo Leon holds the third place with 7 537, after the State of Mexico with 12 890 and Mexico City with 11 105 (INEGI, 2013).

The growing tendency of divorce in Nuevo Leon, shown by the rate of divorce per hundred marriages indicates a dual effect both in the increase of divorces, which increased in 162.8 percent between 2000 and 2011, and

Graph 1. Evolution of divorce at national level and in Nuevo Leon



Source: own elaboration with data from INEGI (2016).

in the decrease of registered marriages, decreasing 20.6 percent over the same period (INEGI, 2013).

## **DIVORCE AS A PROCESS OF FAMILY TRANSFORMATION**

In the familial circle divorce is a process of rupture and transformation, mainly constituted by three moments: i) when one of the members start to consider separation; ii) when the spouses' separation occurs; and, iii) when legally separation is formalized (Ribeiro and Cepeda, 1991).

The aforementioned process is characterized by being heterogeneous, as it appears at every socioeconomic level, in marriages with uneven duration and various age groups. Moreover, it shows some tendencies such as: occur to a larger extent in the groups with the most schooling, it is commonly asked by the woman, increasing in groups with duration over ten years of marriage, and especially occur in the so called transitional couples<sup>3</sup> (INEGI, 2008 y 2010; Burin, 2007; Meler, 1998; Ribeiro, 1994).

The fact that women ask for separation and divorce to a larger extent has been associated among other factors to in the increase in tensions between spouses, who are usually linked to changes in the expectations from marriage and also to the difference in these expectations between the couple (Barahona, 2004; Giddens, 1992). In parallel to demographic changes, a larger average number in the life of the couple is noticed (from a longer life expectancy), as well a longer years of child dependency (from the increase in schooling years); additionally, diversity and changes in the roles exercised by the members of the couple, which contributes to the aforesaid tensions (Burin and Meler, 1998).

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The analysis presented in this document mainly retakes the results of a comprehensive study on divorce supported on funds from the Program for the Improvement of Professorship, following a transversal design, quantitative and correlational; it was carried out in the metropolitan area of Monterrey over 2010, with a sample of 779 participants, 457 women and

<sup>3</sup> Transitional couples are defined by Burin and Meler (1998) as those with traditional-couple characteristics, with a clear division of tasks between genders, together with some innovative or modern ones; this is to say, more egalitarian and symmetric relationships in some aspects of their domestic lives. This combination of models occasionally appears as a product of the swing between one model and other over time.

322 men who live in this area, regardless of their current marital status and time after divorce.

A profile chart<sup>4</sup> proper for the study was devised, to do so aspects pointed out by the specialized literature were retaken and expert researchers participated in an international research network, from which a multidisciplinary team was formed with researcher-professors from the Faculties of Social Work and Human Development, the Faculty of Psychology of the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon, plus a group of researchers from the Université de Aix-Marseille, France, coordinated by Manuel Ribeiro. The sample was mixed, following a stratified design with participants from various schooling and income levels, and heterogeneity in terms of the respondents' age, time after divorce and number of children. On the one side, it share by Basic Geostatistical Area in open population was established, 300 of the total 1230 areas in Monterrey's metropolitan area; on the other, the sample was complemented with voluntary participation of the members of self-help for divorced people and two family courts and the Ecclesiastical Tribunal of Monterrey.

This way, a heterogeneous sample was captured; it comprised various socioeconomic and schooling levels, with variety in age, municipalities of residence, time after divorce, duration of marriage and number of children, which allowed examining the diversity of situations faced along the processes, as well as those after divorce, fulfilling the proposed goal (table 1).

Among the main characteristics of the participants we can point out that average schooling noticeably surpasses the general population, corresponding to 8.6 years on average in Mexico (8.4 woman and 8.7 men) and 9.8 years on average in Nuevo Leon (nine women and 10 men), which verifies that those with more schooling, on average, are the ones who carry out the legal dissolution of their marriages (INEGI, 2013). This agrees with previous studies' observations on the subject (Ojeda, 1986; Ojeda and González, 2008) and with similar studies in the state, such as the Diagnosis of the Family in Nuevo Leon (Ribeiro, 2010). Another aspect that stand-out is the average age at the moment of marriage, declared by the participants, is similar to that found in official data, corresponding to 24.3 years for women and 26.6 for men, for the decade corresponding to the study

4 The profile chart included the following: i) sociodemographic data; ii) data on marriage and divorce; iii) current family status; iv) effects of marriage; v) autonomy and wellbeing during and after marriage. The chart comprised a total of 214 questions, of which eight were open; it was applied by a team of 28 interviewers, all of them undergraduate and graduate students of the Faculty of Social Work and Human Development of the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon; they were previously trained. The chart was applied by means of the structured interview technique.

(INEGI, 2008; Ribeiro, 2010a). Likewise, it is possible to observe that marriage *social duration*<sup>5</sup> is shorter than its *legal duration*<sup>6</sup>, a difference that is explained by the time of physical separation between the spouses prior to the legal formalization of the separation, this time on average in the present study is 18 months in the group of women and 15 months for men. Regarding time after divorce, it is noticeable that it is seven years, with no significant differences between sexes (table 1).

The marital status reported at the time of the study is mainly divorced, significantly higher for women; the contrary is noticed among who have a new partner, being significantly higher for men (table 1). This situation increases in relation to previous decades, according to prior studies (Calderoni, 2008; Ribeiro and Cepeda, 1991); it is difficult to compare this datum at national level, since there are no records of second or third marriages, particularly if these are not formalized.

Adding to the above, it is noticed that the sort of family<sup>7</sup> in which the participant lives is mainly reconstructed or unipersonal in the case of men; while women, generally live in mono-parental, reconstructed or else nuclear or extended arrangement. It is necessary to underscore that those who live in an extended or nuclear family, by and large, have returned to live with their family of origin, this situation is more common among women. Another aspect to underscore is the heterogeneity of the group regarding social stratum, which is evident at the time of discriminating by intervals monthly family incomes (table 1), as well as in the proportion of participants residing in the ten municipalities of Monterrey's metropolitan area.

5 In this analysis the term marriage *social duration* corresponds to the time the couple lived together; this is to say, the time elapsed from the celebration of the marriage to the physical separation of the spouses.

6 Marriage *legal duration* is the time elapsed from the celebration of marriage to its legal dissolution (divorce).

7 The term "sort of family" refers to the structure of family arrangement in which the participants live, establishing the following typology: i) reconstructed, it is the one comprised by the divorced participant with a new partner or spouse regardless they live with their respective children; ii) mono-parental, previously defined, it is the one that comprises the participant with their depending child(ren); iii) unipersonal, when the participant lives on their own vive; iv) nuclear refers to a family composed of parents and children without a spouse, generally the family of origin of the participant; v) extended, composed of three or more generations, also corresponding to the return of the participant to its family of origin.

Table 1. Profile of the participants (sample)				
<i>Characteristics of the participants</i>	Men	Range	Women	Range
Age	40 years	(19-82)	40 years	(19-79)
Schooling	15 years	(3-31)	14 years	(0-26)
Age at marriage	25 years	(15-39)	23 years	(13-41)
Social duration of marriage	6.24 years	(0-37)	7.87 years	(0-44)
Legal duration of marriage	7.52 years	(0-37)	9.29 years	(0-45)
Time of separation prior to divorce	15 months		18 months	
Time passed after divorce	7.28 years		7.59 years	
<i>Marital status at the time of the study:</i>				
Divorced	57%		72%	
Married	34%		19%	
Free union	8%		7%	
Separated	1%		1.20%	
Widow(er)	0%		0.50%	
<i>Sort of family:</i>				
Reconstructed	38%		21%	
Single-parent	5%		38%	
Unipersonal	29%		9%	
Nuclear	17%		13%	
Extended	2%		12%	
Other	9%		7%	
<i>Average monthly family income:</i>				
< \$3 000 MXN a month	2%		8%	
(3 000 - 6 000)	6%		13%	
(6 001 - 12 000)	17%		18%	
(12 001 - 15 000)	11%		13%	
(15 001 - 20 000)	16%		15%	
(20 001 - 30 000)	13%		15%	
(30 001 - 50 000)	18%		11%	
50 001 or more	17%		7%	

Source: own elaboration with data from the study sample on Divorce in Nuevo Leon (2010).

## ANALYSIS OF DIVORCE

In Mexico there are two types of divorce: *judicial*, which implies a trial, and *administrative*, which is only performed in a civil registration and requires that both spouses are of legal age and had not had children together, also had dissolved the marital society and have been married for a year at least; for its part, judicial divorce can be a *necessity*, which implies that one of the spouses sues the other adducing one of the causes established in the Civil Code of the corresponding federal state as a reason for divorce; or else, *voluntary* divorce, which requires the consent of both spouses and the elaboration of agreement in which the apportionment of assets, as well as child custody. The latter allows hiding the actual reason for divorce and implies lower costs and shorter time, moreover lower emotional exhaustion over the trial.

In the study carried out in Monterrey, seven out of ten divorces of the participants were voluntary, whereas one out of seven was necessary, one out of eight was administrative and one in a hundred annulled. This distribution is similar to that noticed at national level, however in this case the proportion of voluntary divorces is lower (61 percent), while necessary (24 percent) and administrative divorces (15 percent) were higher in the country (INEGI, 2010a). The increase in voluntary divorces is a tendency observed in recent years, which demands an agreement between spouses and on which factors related to both investing resources and time on the trial and the desire to keep in private the main cause of the divorce have an influence. However, it is important to consider that in some cases, the divorce that began as necessary can turn into voluntary, sometime owing to the intervention of the spouses' lawyers. Albeit, to a lesser extent, the contrary also occurs; a voluntary divorce ends up being necessary.

Regarding the initiative in the divorce, our study reveals that it is mainly women (six out of ten cases) who ask for it, followed by both asking a divorce in an agreement (one out of five cases); at a lesser proportion men take the decision (18 percent) and even lesser, when a third party suggests divorcing (one percent). At national level, the majority (65 percent) indicates that it was started by both spouses, to a lesser extent divorce asked by women (20 percent) and a low proportion corresponds to those asked by men (14 percent) (INEGI, 2010). Data differ mainly because in the study presented here the direct answer by the participants was accounted for, which indicates the person that felt the need to dissolve the marital bond, regardless of how the divorce ended; on the contrary, official data for the

international sphere show the datum at the end of the process, this way it is presented in function of who won the lawsuit.

About the cause as main reason for divorce, infidelity of the ex-partner is cited in the largest proportion mainly by women (one out of four), while men (one out of eight) also indicate it is the main reason, but to a lesser extent than women. This situation is also noticed at national level, noticing in 2010 an increase in the proportion of women who state adultery of infidelity as the main reason for divorce (55 percent), increasing to 57 percent in 2011 and 58 percent in 2012 (INEGI, 2013). These data do not directly reveal that infidelity among married couples is increasing, but that tolerance for respect does, especially in women. It is also noticeable that even if this is reported to a lesser extent by men, they point at it as a main reason for divorce, a situation that differs from that observed in previous decades (Ribeiro and Cepeda, 1991).

Among the reasons pointed out by women distinguishable are violence or aggressiveness (11 percent), alcoholism (8.3 percent), irresponsibility (seven percent) and lack of love (six percent); while, men indicate incompatibility of characters (ten percent), lack of communication (seven percent), lack of love (seven percent) and continual altercations or fights (six percent). Reporting violence as one of the main causes for divorce pointed out by women agrees with official data regarding this phenomenon, as ENDIREH (National Survey on the Dynamic of Relationships at the Household, 2011) underscores that 42 percent of married women or un free union declared having an incident of violence with their last partner. In like manner, pointing at the partner's irresponsibility agrees with the observation of violence in the survey; 58.1 percent indicates having faced domestic violence, which includes not giving money to support the household as well as wasting this money (INEGI, 2013). Even if these reasons are pointed out as the main ones for the breakup and marital dissolution, it seems to be what triggers the decision, for inquiring on other reasons in the process of deception and rupture, it is noticed the accumulation of between 8 and 10 reasons on average, women indicate from one to 16 different accumulated reasons; while men declare between six and eight, with a range between three and 16 accumulated reasons over the breakup and separation on average (graph 2).

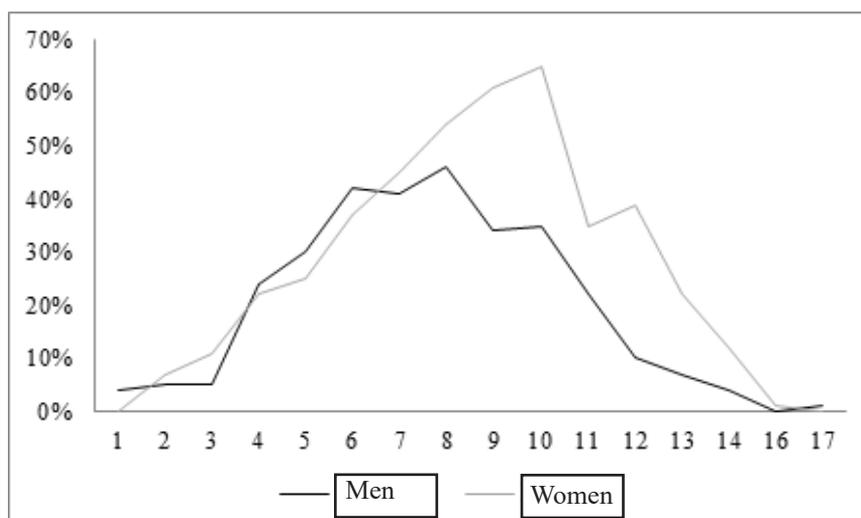
The accumulation of reasons which over the marriage lead to the couple's separation becomes evident when the participants point out the aspects of daily life that lead to conflict. In the group of women: irresponsibility (11 percent); poor coexistence (8.2 percent); alcoholism (5.3 percent);

economic problems (4.9 percent); regular arguments (4.6 percent); lack of commitment (4.4 percent); and bad character (4.4 percent). While men indicate: economic problems (nine percent); jealousy (6.5 percent); lack of communication (6.2 percent); character incompatibility (5.9 percent); as well as lack of time due to work (5.6 percent).

This way, it is noticed that in most of the cases the decision to dissolve marriage occurs after a deception process, which can take several years, for when participants were asked about time they had been thinking of divorcing it is noticed that six out of ten did it for a year, prior to physical separation; only 11 percent points out not having thought and made the decision in the presence of the reason they expressed as principal, while the rest (29 percent) indicates having thought of it between 13 months and 10 years. This time was on average 21 months for women, while for men it was 17 months. If this is added by the time of being physically separated, it is 18 months for women and 15 for men on average before starting the divorce process; this means that in the separation and breakup process both the main reasons expressed and tensions, disillusion and pain accumulated, in a process that extends mainly for women. This makes it evident that such process is generally gradual, appearing in the first place an affective breakup, before physical separation, while this, on occasion, is intermittent before reaching the legal dissolution of marriage, which only formalizes the marriage conclusion. Save some exceptions, when the decision was expedite, the decision was made immediately after finding out the main reason for divorce, a situation especially underscored by men (graph 2).

In spite of the situation, as previously indicated, one out of four women and 44 percent of men has joined or married again; even for both sexes, one out of a hundred has divorced again (graph 2). In addition to retake the growing tendency of marrying again or be in with a partner after divorce, noticeable in the increase of the proportion, especially women who have remarried, over the average reported in studies carried out in past decades (Calderoni, 2005; Ribeiro and Cepeda, 1991). Such tendency is verified when the respondents who are not married at the moment are asked if they want to remarry: it is noticed that one in three women answers positively, whereas men do half of the times; this situation is greater than that observed in previous studies (Calderoni, 2005; Ribeiro and Cepeda, 1991).

Graph 2. Number of accumulated reasons to file a divorce



Source: own elaboration, survey on divorce (2010).

On this situation, it is worth mentioning that in the study carried out it was possible to observe the time elapsed from the first marriage (ended in divorce) to the second union, while the average age at marriage for the first time was 23 years of age for women and 25 for men,<sup>8</sup> while the mean age for the last union in 33 for women and 35 for men; which indicates a ten-year difference on average between the beginning of the first and second union.

Another aspect to distinguish is the heterogamy,<sup>9</sup> observed both at age and schooling in the marriage dissolved, in which noticeable that 13 percent of the interviewed women stated having married a man younger than them, which breaks the social imaginary that the man must be older in a relationship, however this situation is fulfilled in seven out of ten cases; while 15 percent presents homogamy, as it indicates being the same age as the partner. It is noticeable that this tendency shows an increase in recent marriages; in the marriages recorded in 2011 there is an increase in heterogamy, particularly of the situation of women who marry younger women, proportion represented in 21 percent, while older men in 67 percent and

<sup>8</sup> The mean age at first marriage does not show significant differences with that reported by official statistics, is 24 years of age for women and 26 for men according to 2009 National Survey on Demographic Dynamic (ENADID), (INEGI, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Heterogamy is the term used in this study to refer to the difference between the members of the couple, particularly age, and years of schooling; being antonym to homogamy, which refers to similarity.

homogamy only 12 percent. This seems to hint a cultural break, regarding lesser social pressure to marry an older man, which prevailed for long in the social imaginary, as expected in the couples.

Heterogamy is more noticeable in the case of schooling, as 38 percent of the women nowadays are more educated than their former partners, from one to 12 years more of schooling, while a smaller proportion (28 percent) has lower schooling than their ex-partner, from one to 11 years; in this regard, 34 percent presents homogamy, as they have the same years of schooling. It is important to underscore this situation's relevance, as we will see further, it is an important resource to face the effects of divorce, especially to develop autonomy and wellbeing level after divorce, especially for women. However, a limit in the analysis of this factor is that it is not possible to discriminate the moment when the difference in schooling, especially when women surpass the schooling of their partners; this is to say, in this study it is not possible to state whether from the beginning of the union the woman decided to marry a man with lower schooling, or on the contrary, woman surpassed him over their marriage. Or else, if it occurs as a part of the strategies to face affective or physical separation and the effects of divorce, studying over such period or at the end of it. What is indeed possible to pinpoint, it is the largest educational resource in women who reached divorce, which increases their liberty in decision making and so the autonomy levels displayed (Giddens, 2003).

As regards the custody of children born in wedlock, even if they are still dependents, it is noticed that six out of ten cases, woman had the custody; one in three indicates that it was her partner's; and one in a hundred states having a shared custody;<sup>10</sup> four percent of them answered some of their children lived with them and other with their former partners (generally, because they are not underage or dependents), also two percent states they did not have depending children at the time of divorce. Evidence indicates that women are those who generally take up responsibility for dependent children, a situation that justifies a more careful analysis of the wellbeing and autonomy levels observed for them, which directly affect the children's wellbeing (Dowling and Barnes, 2008; Street, 2004).

As for child support, it is noticeable that three out of four women with depending children states not receiving it, while two percent states receiving it only occasionally and four percent, sporadically; one in six answers receiving it regularly; however, most of them considers it insufficient. This

<sup>10</sup> Shared custody does not exist in the State of Nuevo Leon as a legal resource, however, it is mentioned by some of the participants as an agreement at the time of divorce, regarding the former spouses sharing care responsibilities and time spent with children.

is noticeable, particularly because the mean age of the children have is 12.37 years, which implies expenses to support and educate the children. This situation seems to be related to the fact that 83 percent of the women who participated indicated they work at the moment of the study, a proportion that greatly surpasses the one in this population universe, since according to the National Survey on Occupation and Employment (2010), at national level 73 percent of the divorced women work (INEGI, 2010).

#### ANALYSIS OF DIVORCE EFFECTS

One of the relevant factors in the way to face the effects of divorce, particularly in wellbeing after divorce, as we will see further, is the duration of the marriage, for our study this time is on average nine years in terms of *legal duration*, while in terms of coexistence with the ex-partner (*social duration*) the average is eight years. This is noticeable, as a growing tendency to divorce is evident in the marriages with the longest duration; this way, according to official figures, at national level the largest proportion appears in marriages with a social duration of 10 years or longer. Particularly, in 2011 the mean duration of marriages which reached divorce was 13.5 years, being 3.1 years longer than that observed in 2000, in which it was 10.4 years (INEGI, 2013).

This situation can be associated, on the one side, as previously indicated to the increase of consensual unions, particularly between young couples, which sometimes do not formalize the union, this way, even if there are breakups, these are not registered, or else couples marry some years after living together; then divorces occur mainly in those generations that established a marital contract. On the other side, a different explanation regarding this increase is the rise in the number of coexistence years (from the increase in life expectancy). By and large, evidence allows concluding that a long marriage does not secure its perpetuity, while this is not a protection sign that prevents breakup or divorce.

One of the indicators with the most relevance in wellbeing of divorced people is their mood. In this study we managed to compare the one the participants perceive they had while married and the one at the time of the study, which allows accounting for the areas they say they have improved, as well as those in which their life was damaged. In this regard, evidence indicate a marked improvement comparing before and now, mainly in women, and especially in areas such as having companion over the day, plans and future projects, feeling depressed, solitude, and a feeling of emptiness or contemplating suicide (table 2).

Mood	Before divorce		After divorce	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Had company over the day	60	63	83	81
Felt lonely	65	46	18	19
Had plans and future projects	73	86	93	94
Felt their lives were empty	58	42	11	12
Become frequently bored	52	48	10	10
Felt depressed	70	50	21	16
Contemplated suicide	18	7	5	5

Source: own elaboration, survey on divorce (2010).

It is noticeable the high proportion of women who indicate having felt depressed before divorce, and also feeling lonely and in particular having contemplated suicide over that period; this situation is utterly different among men, for them the situation seems to be less adverse during marriage and so less evident the change between before and after divorce.

In parallel, the participants were asked to compare their situation during their marriage and at the time of the study in various areas in view of locating aspects with improvements and others which remained the same or worsened after divorce. The goal was to detect the elements with which to face the greatest difficulties, which affect the participants' lives, especially women's and their children, since the majority of them have the custody of the children, as previously mentioned. The obtained results allow verifying that almost all the areas present an improvement in the group of women; the only exception is relationships with the former partner, being more evident this in their mood, feelings of happiness, solitude, relations with children and love life; even aspects such as labor, economic situation and relationships with friends significantly improve according to the perception of women (table 3). The improvement reported in the group of women takes place on average in nine or more areas of their life, which generally indicates a perception of improvement in most of the revised areas, while in the aspects deemed negative are minority. This agrees with other studies (Médor, 2013; Street, 2004), particularly in terms of perception of better life conditions and resource control after divorce (Giddens, 2003).

In the case of men such improvement takes place in the same areas, with the only exception the relationships with children, and to a lesser extent, feelings of loneliness; however, improvement appears at a lesser proportion than for women. In both sexes it is noticeable that the area with

Table 3. Effects of divorce according to the participants' sex

Comparative situation	Women (percentage)			Men (percentage)		
	Improved	No changes	Worsened	Improved	No changes	Worsened
Economic	60	21	19	63	26	11
Labor	66	27	7	59	33	8
Health	57	35	8	55	40	5
Mood	84	11	5	76	18	6
Relationship with their children	71	23	6	46	32	23
Relationship with former spouse	25	31	44	21	27	52
Help from relatives	54	44	2	39	58	3
Help from children	58	39	3	33	62	5
Feelings of happiness	84	12	4	76	18	6
Feelings of solitude	74	19	7	60	29	11
Family problems	53	39	8	47	50	3
Relationships with friends	60	34	6	53	44	3
Love life	70	21	9	74	17	9
Frequency with which they see their children	54	41	5	35	23	42

Source: own elaboration from the survey on divorce (2010).

the most difficulty is the relationship with the former partner, which indicates that conflict does not end with the divorce, but continues; in like manner, it is plain to see the evident differences between sexes regarding the relationship with children, how regularly they see them, and the reception of support from relatives or children after divorce, which for men are significantly lower (table 3). This table seems to reflect the increase in the tension of family relationships, particularly for men, who face difficulty to continue the relationship with their children, possibly associated to the fact of not providing child support.

Enquiring on the characteristics of the group of women that influence the most on the perception of improvement, it is noticed that women are better educated, participate more in the decision to divorce, the effects of those who made the decision are more positive, unlike those who live as abandoned. This verifies Giddens' thesis (2003) that more resources, especially of the authoritative kind, this is to say on liberty for decision making and recourse control, becomes a situation of greater wellbeing to face a process of change.

The areas in which women report a significant improvement are: social life, mood, feelings of happiness, love life, health and economic. Owing to the above, the active participation in the decision of divorce seems to be of great relevance, while those who pointed out that the decision was made by both members of the couple state they remain the same in many areas. Women who on the contrary indicated feeling abandoned pointed out worsening in several of the assessed areas; finding of other studies agree with our results (Dowling and Barnes, 2008; Wang and Amato, 2000).

Likewise, the participants were asked about their feelings of happiness, particularly if they considered themselves happier at the time of the study (after divorce) than when married. It was found that women respond in a larger proportion (86 percent) being happier at present. The same situation is observed for men but to a lesser proportion (80.3 percent); those who indicated feeling less happy are a low percentage: 3.9 percent and 5.3 percent, respectively; those who indicated feeling the same at both moments were 7.2 percent women and 10.9 percent, men; while those who indicated not knowing the answer were 2.9 percent, women, and 3.4 percent, men.

Moreover, they were asked if they regretted divorcing. The women who answered yes were a low proportion (4.2 percent), while men showed a larger one (5.6 percent). Some women stated they regretted at first, but not at the time of the study (4.8 percent), a situation present in 8.4 percent of men. On the contrary, women who underscored not regretting accounted for a high proportion (90.6 percent), while men (84.4 percent) accounted for a lower range.

The evidence verifies that the situation faced by women along the marriage that was dissolved seem to have clear disadvantages regarding men; on the contrary and unlike men, at the time of divorce women consider they are at a better state of mood and wellbeing, not only emotional but material and economic; this in spite that they recognize having faced health problems or diseases (33 percent women; 20 percent men), economic problems (18 percent women, five percent men), social rejection (eight and four percent), loneliness (6 percent, 16 percent), stop seeing their children (13 percent, men), problems with their children (12 percent, women), depression (six percent, women), difficulties to adapt (13 percent, men) and bad relationship with the ex-partner (six percent, both sexes). According to studies in parallel with the same population, it was found that the mourn period after divorce, in which these effects appear to a larger extent, is on average two years after breakup, after which the improvement mentioned appears (Rodríguez and Ribeiro, 2012).

On the basis of this evidence, it is possible to point out that women face the wearing, tension and rupture process over marriage, before divorce, which indicates how divorce becomes the formalization of the already existing affective bond, allowing women to release themselves from the ties; after divorce women face their condition of divorced with greater wellbeing and better quality of life. There are also improvements for the case of men, however they seem to face, in some aspects, situations that worsen their quality of life, particularly regarding the relation with their ex-partner, children and relatives, but they still enjoy to a larger extent their relations with friends.

Delving into the effects of divorce, especially in the group of women, the factors that manage to better predict or explain the improvement perceived by women were sought; to do so a liner regression tests was resorted to, using the step wise method, which allowed identifying the combination of the studied variables that allow explaining the recorded effects (table 4), noticing that at 39 percent of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.388$ ) these can be explained by the combination of five variables: i) a higher wellbeing level

Table 4. Model that explains the level of the effects faced by women after divorce

Indicators	Value	Statistical significance
R	0.623	
R Square	0.388	
Standard error in the estimation	3.543	
Degrees of freedom	6	
F	22.625	0.000
<i>Beta of:</i>		
Higher later well-being	0.471	0.000
Autonomy after divorce	0.181	0.002
Schooling	0.194	0.001
Coverage of needs	0.122	0.037
Social duration of marriage	-0.381	0.004

Source: own elaboration, survey on divorce (2010).

after divorce ( $\beta = 0.471$   $p < 0.01$ ); ii) a shorter social duration of marriage ( $\beta = -0.381$   $p < 0.01$ ); iii) better education ( $\beta = 0.194$   $p < 0.01$ ); iv) greater autonomy levels after divorce ( $\beta = 0.181$   $p < 0.01$ ); and, v) the coverage of their needs and their children's ( $\beta = 0.122$   $p < 0.05$ ). This way, it is possible to point out, according to evidence, that in terms of temporariness, the time elapsed after divorce is not long, as reported by a sizable part of the literature on this topic, but else the time of coexisting with their partners negatively determines the perception of improvement or worsening of their quality of life. This way, the longer a frustrating or emotionally exhausting marriage, the worse negative effects after divorce are noticed, regardless of the time after it. This situation may be related to a lower development of authoritative resources as women are constrained for longer in a relationship whose effect on mood was previously evinced.

#### **AUTONOMY AND WELLBEING OF WOMEN DURING MARRIAGE**

One of the key aspects in familial wellbeing, particularly the children's, after a divorce to a large extent depends on the way the father faces and solves the situation, which in most of the cases corresponds to the mother (Dowling and Barnes, 2008). Because of this, it is indeed relevant to analyze the autonomy and wellbeing of women as well as the difference

between the one they expressed having before and after divorce. It is worth mentioning that for the analysis of autonomy<sup>11</sup> the elements of availability of resources are considered, mainly time and incomes, also liberty for decision making, especially on the mentioned resources, and their children's education and discipline.

On the other side, the wellbeing level was defined considering the women's satisfaction both with themselves and their autonomy, with the coverage of their needs and their children's, as well as personal, familial, social and labor performance. The theoretical and operative approach for the analysis of wellbeing was retaken from Sen (2000) in terms of the need to consider those elements that compose the characteristics of the subject and the satisfaction levels for them.

To analyze the autonomy level showed by women over their marriage, in the first place it was necessary to revise the factors associated to it by means of linear regression with the step wise method and it was found that the autonomy of women over their marriage is explained or predicted in 47 percent of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.470$ ) from the combination of three variables: i) the number of children ( $\beta = -0.541$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), ii) the social duration of marriage ( $\beta = -0.185$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); and, iii) their ex-partner's schooling ( $\beta = 0.146$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Of these, the first two factors shown by the model have negative values, while the third was positive; which indicates that the fewer children and shorter duration of marriage and more schooling of the ex-partner, the more autonomy of the woman (table 5). Therefore, this situation allows interpreting that scant coexistence and more schooling of the ex-partner, together with few children are the main elements that convey more autonomy in marriage. However, the fact that a longer social duration of marriage has a relevant impact on the autonomy level can indicate both that longer years of marriage implies lesser development of authority resources in the marriage, but also that because of the low autonomy level in them there is a longer marriage, and so the decision of divorce is postponed in spite of the dissatisfaction. This situation verifies the relation present at the level of resources (authoritative and distributive) and the capacity of agency and change in the participant women (Giddens, 2003).

Likewise, it is noticeable the influence of the spouse's schooling, particularly retaking the findings in terms of heterogamy. As previously stated, women surpass men in schooling with a significant proportion; education as a resource becomes relevant not only in the face of decision of divorce

11 The concept of autonomy is theoretically built based on Giddens' standpoint (1984 and 2003) and operationalized from the findings from studies on the topics (Casique, 2004; Street, 2004).

and the deed, for according to evidence, population that to a larger proportion reaches divorce is the one with the most schooling; what is more, women surpass men in this regard in a statistically significant manner and the schooling of the ex-partner becomes relevant in the development of autonomy for women, especially over their marriages, turning into a valuable resource that provides women with autonomy and wellbeing; it seems to be a distributive resource present in men, which promotes the authoritative resource (liberty for decision making and access to resources) in women (Giddens, 2003).

Table 5. Model that explains the autonomy of women

Indicators	Value	Statistical significance
<i>Variables that explain autonomy over marriage</i>		
R	0.685	
R Square	0.470	
Error of the estimation	4.332	
F	122.169	0.000
<i>Beta of:</i>		
Number of children	-0.541	0.000
Social duration of marriage	-0.185	0.000
Schooling of the former spouse	0.146	0.000
<i>Variables hat explain autonomy after divorce</i>		
R	0.822	
R Square	0.676	
Error of the estimation	2.706	
F	169.143	0.000
<i>Beta of:</i>		
Number of children	-0.814	0.000
Coverage of needs	0.156	0.000
Age	0.118	0.000
Affects faced after divorce	0.106	0.000
Total family income total	-0.087	0.008

Source: own elaboration, survey on divorce (2010).

From the above, it is possible to point out that women who accomplished a greater development of autonomy over their marriage, according to their perception, are the ones who had fewer children, their marriage lasted shorter and had a more educated partner. This agrees with the generational group of the youngest women, mainly who present homogamy in age with their ex-partner, but surpass them in schooling; this is to say, schooling as a distributive resource, following Giddens (1984) apparently provides marriages with openness and democracy, giving women greater authoritative resources to participate in decision making and liberty to access and use resources of time, income and discipline.

As regards the wellbeing<sup>12</sup> women perceive having had over their marriage using the linear regression test with the same method, it is noticed that the factors that predict this variable are main the autonomy level developed over marriage ( $\beta = 0.516$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), woman's age ( $\beta = 0.146$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), as well the social duration of the marriage ( $\beta = -0.321$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) which ended; such model has low predictive level, as it explains 26 of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.266$ ) in the level of perceived wellbeing. Albeit, it is noticeable that the value shown by the first factor as well as its significance level, which allows verifying the hypothesis E: *the level of autonomy women perceive having enjoyed over marriage influences the wellbeing level they perceived over the same period* (table 6).

Furthermore, it is noticed that the two first factors have a positive value, while third is negative, which indicates that the greater autonomy during marriage, older age of women, the greater the perceived wellbeing; while coexistence time with the former partner produces the opposite, this is to say, the longer the marriage, the lower the wellbeing perceived over that marriage. It is worth mentioning that in this model, the explanatory value of social duration of marriage is higher than that observed for autonomy, which underscores that in this case it will have a greater impact, i.e., the years the marriage lasted negatively influence on the wellbeing of women over their marriage.

#### **WOMEN'S AUTONOMY AND WELLBEING AFTER MARRIAGE**

Unlike the autonomy developed over marriage, the one held by the participants in the study shows a different combination of factors or variables in the model that explain or predict it, also noticing that even if it appears as

12 The concept of wellbeing in this study focuses, retaking Amartya Sen's statement (2000), on capabilities and operations, as well as on the satisfaction of the subject regarding their possibility to choose various opportunities.

Table 6. Explanatory model of women's wellbeing

Indicators	Value	Statistical significance
<i>Variables that explain wellbeing over marriage</i>		
R	0.516	
R Square	0.266	
Error of the estimation	6.582	
F	29.522	0.000
<i>Beta of:</i>		
Autonomy level over marriage	0.519	0.000
Age of the woman	0.146	0.013
Social duration of marriage	-0.321	0.022
<i>Variables that explain wellbeing after marriage</i>		
R	0.518	
R Square	0.269	
Error of the estimation	3.863	
F	42.427	0.000
<i>Beta of</i>		
Autonomy level after divorce	0.489	0.000
Schooling of the divorced women	0.117	0.041

Source: own elaboration, Survey on divorce (2010).

a main factor i) the number of children ( $\beta = -0.814$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) is a relevant factor; ii) the coverage in the scale of personal and familial needs ( $\beta = 0.156$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); iii) age of the woman ( $\beta = 0.118$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); iv) the effects faced after divorce ( $\beta = 0.106$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); and, v) total family income ( $\beta = -0.087$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The predictive value of this model is high, it predicts or explains 68 percent of the variance of the autonomy level ( $R^2 = 0.676$ ); as for the values and their interpretation, it is noticed that being negative the first and last factors, they indicate that fewer children and lower income, higher autonomy levels are noticed. Regarding the other factors, all of them show a positive correlation, which indicates that the better coverage of needs, older woman and more positive effects of divorce, the development of autonomy after divorce will be better.

Evidence seems to indicate that the number of children is relevant in the development of autonomy after divorce, while those who have more children, present more dependency on others who support in family needs. Likewise, having the needs covered and showing less negative effects, in the way on noticing improvement in various areas, directly influence the situation of the woman, especially in their degree of autonomy; while that referred to older age but lower income seems to be linked to the fact that the youngest women, particularly from the higher strata, return to the family of origin, in many cases retaking their role of daughters, which becomes lower levels of autonomy. On the contrary, the oldest women seemed more constrained during their marriage in terms of autonomy, but managed a greater change as we will see further, this is to say, the emancipated to a larger extent than young ones.

Regarding women's wellbeing after divorce, it is noticed that it is explained mainly by two factors: i) level of autonomy after divorce ( $\beta = 0.489$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); and, ii) schooling of the divorced women ( $\beta = 0.117$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), whose combination can predict 27 percent its variance ( $R^2 = 0.269$ ), showing that positive values for both variables, which points at the development of their autonomy after divorce, together with better schooling, determine to a certain extent the wellbeing of this group at the time of the study. Such pointing can be theoretically explained with the statement by Giddens (1984) in his theory of social structuration and social praxis, as regards that from a combination of authoritative and distributive resources the subjects' wellbeing can be increased. This evidence allow retaining hypothesis F: *the autonomy level women show after divorce influences on the level of wellbeing they show at the same moment.*

#### **CHANGES IN AUTONOMY AND WELLBEING AFTER DIVORCE**

In view of verifying the two hypothesis of the revised study, Hypothesis A: *the level of autonomy perceived by women presents an increase after divorce*, and Hypothesis B: *the wellbeing level women perceive to have will be greater after the moment of divorce*, both the levels of autonomy and wellbeing in the group of women were compared so that regarding autonomy it is possible to observe by means of *t* test in the comparison that indeed there is a statistically significant change between the level of autonomy perceived by the participants at the time previous to divorce and that at time of the study.

Evidence exhibit an increase in four percentage points between the means of the previous level and the current one. Such increase is verified

in the changes shown by the various central tendency measures, as well as range. By and large, it is possible to point that 72 percent of the women expresses an increase in their autonomy level, while 13 percent expresses to be at the same level as in their marriage, and 15 percent, on the contrary, expresses a worsening in their autonomy. On the basis of this result, which evince the increase in the level of autonomy after divorce in the group of participants, it is possible to retain the aforementioned hypothesis, which indicates a substantial improvement in the women's perception of their situation, reporting higher autonomy levels related to the control of resources, particularly on decision making, this is to say, authoritative (Giddens, 2003). This last agrees with other studies' findings (Médor, 2013; Street, 2004).

Results, therefore, indicate that divorce is for three out of four women an emancipation process, which became evident as active participation of women in the decision to divorce, who after a long wait, accumulation of reasons for divorce and a lengthy deception process, face constriction levels in their autonomy that increase over the time they were married, this is to say, the longer marriage the lower autonomy levels during marriage. In spite of, they eventually took the initiative to divorce, a situation evinced in those with the lowest level of autonomy during marriage, specifically the oldest, who exhibited higher levels after marriage.

It is necessary to underscore that in the group of participants, those who showed a diminution in their autonomy level are mainly those with the highest autonomy levels during their marriage, which seems to be related to the fact of facing difficulties to conciliate family and labor, and experiencing a diminution in the quality of life after divorce, as these women were married with a partner with better schooling, which is associated with higher incomes. This way, it is noticed that in the face of the partner's better schooling, they enjoyed a more democratic relation during marriage.

On the wellbeing level, both the levels before and after divorce were compared, noticing by means of *t* test a statistically significant increase. This increase between both moments is nine percentage points, being more noticeable in the median and also range for both moments. It is worth mentioning that the most (84 percent) perceived an increase in wellbeing level comparing both moments, while only eight percent remains at the same level, and the same proportion expressed diminution in its wellbeing.

These results allow retaining the second hypothesis of the study, B, which proposes an increase in the welfare level after divorce; at the same time, results verify that previously stated, in respect to the improvement

declared by the participants after divorce, noticeable in terms of the effects faced in the assessed areas, especially mood and feelings of happiness, which as mentioned is associated with the development of autonomy (liberty to access resource and in decision making) after divorce, and also with women's better schooling. This last, let us remember, can be related in some cases with the mourn process and separation faced while contemplating divorce, accumulating reasons, as it is perhaps a strategy to face it, mainly characterized by the increase in women's resources, both authoritative (autonomy) and distributive (material resources and capabilities) in order to solve problems derived from separation and to support themselves and their children, which is one of the main resources for emancipation, and as evinced, for the autonomy of women (Giddens, 2003).

## CONCLUSIONS

According to the analysis, it is possible to conclude that divorce is a social and demographic phenomenon which mainly accounts for family transitions; it is characterized by being complex and heterogeneous, displaying a growing tendency in Mexico, especially in some states of the country, among which distinguishable are the State of Mexico, Mexico City, Nuevo Leon, and Colima. Even if the country on average does not present other countries' levels, among which Europa and North America are distinguishable, does present an accelerated increase in divorces and separations and in the diminution of marriages, especially in the aforesaid states.

Such phenomenon appears at every social and economic level, even though it increases at the most educated groups. Likewise, it is also heterogeneous in the duration of marriage and age of the participants. It is generally asked by the woman, regularly after a series of accumulated reasons, triggered by one cause that leads to the decision. It is then, in many cases, a lengthy process of disillusionment, separation and breakup, which commonly starts with a period of affective separation, ensued by physical distancing, on occasions intermittent, with reconciliations and breakups, to eventually reach, after months or years of separation, the legal process.

Marital infidelity, as a main or triggering reason of divorce, has been on the increase over recent years, with women expressing it as the main reason for separation among women, both at state and national levels. In like manner, there is a growth in divorces, particularly in marriages longer than 10 years, a situation that allows glimpsing the relevance of both the longer duration of marriages in recent decades and the diminution of marriages

among young couples, a situation that does not allow having a record of breakups in these cases, since they are not legally formalized.

Linked to the above, the present analysis allows verifying that women take responsibility for the dependent children in most of the cases, also women incorporate in the labor market if they had not while married, mainly because three out of four women do not received child support. However, one in four has remarried or joined again, and one in three who has not done it considers doing it again in the future; this situation displays an increment regarding previous decades.

The transformation of families that have faced a divorce becomes evident when observing that four out of ten women are a part of a monoparental family, while one in five has reconstructed a family with a new marital union and one in four has returned to their family of origin, producing an extended or nuclear family; whereas in the case of men, on the contrary, four out of ten have rebuild the family with a new union, one in three lives on his own and only one out of ten has returned to their family of origin.

Because of this, and particularly as it is one of the main indicators of the second demographic transition, the analysis of the characteristics this phenomenon presents is relevant, as well as its social and familial implications, especially for the group of women, who as evinced, generally are in charge of dependent children. Because of that, the way in which women face the effects of divorce, particularly their autonomy and wellbeing directly influence their children's wellbeing, presenting a crucial element of the social and family implication of divorce.

The analysis of divorce at microsocial level allows glimpsing the transformations noticed inside the family, specifically in couple relations in marriage, underscoring that even if there are hints of an incipient democratization process in the couple, noticeable mainly in the change of the women's role, who increase their schooling and work to a larger extent, have better expectations regarding marriage and lower tolerance to their partners' faults, particularly in the case of violence or infidelity, as well irresponsibility of the spouse.

However, the presence of tensions, ambivalences and inequalities in the couples is noticed, among which it is possible to observe scant responsibility between the spouses, such tensions seem to increase over the breakup and separation process, generating severe discomfort, especially in women, who in spite of this, and following the social imaginary of preserving marriage, usually prolong such process up to a triggering fact appears that makes them put their wellbeing and their children's first.

This implies, according to the revised evidence, facing the effects of a noticeable improvement. Outstanding in particular are changes in mood, feelings of happiness and loneliness. Likewise, noticeable is the increase in the levels of autonomy and wellbeing displayed by most of the women, who in spite of having to work, facing difficulties to conciliate family and labor and take responsibility for depending children, considered feeling better at the time of the study.

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