



## The implications of marital instability for a woman's fertility: Empirical evidence from Italy

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Using a sample of Italian women interviewed in 2003 in the survey “Family and Social Subject,” this paper investigates two issues: (1) how a woman's family life-course (union status and parity/ages of children born in the first marriage) influences the risk of a post-dissolution birth among separated women; and (2) how the experience of a marital disruption affects a woman's cumulated fertility. Given that in Italy marital instability is relatively recent and still barely socially accepted, our main assumption is that separated women engage in more prudent reproductive behaviour than their counterparts living in countries with a longer experience of the phenomenon. With respect to the first point, our results show that: (i) not only remarriage, but also cohabitation, are strongly associated with the likelihood of post-dissolution childbearing; (ii) significant differences in the risk of having a child following the dissolution of a marriage are present only between separated women with no children and separated women with children; thus, separated women with one child have the same probability of experiencing a post-dissolution birth as those with two or more children, and the age of children is irrelevant. With respect to the second point, we find that women who underwent a marital dissolution have lower fertility than those who remained continuously married, and that repartnering enables this group of women to recapture some—but not all—of the fertility lost with the dissolution of the first marriage.

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