

Portugal, Families in

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DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

Portugal is a European country located on the Iberian Peninsula, in southwestern Europe, and is the westernmost nation of the continent. It has been an independent country since the twelfth century and includes two autonomous regions: the archipelagos of Azores and Madeira, discovered in the fifteenth century and inhabited by the Portuguese ever since. Portugal, officially the Portuguese Republic, is a semipresidential constitutional republic, a democratic state based on the rule of law. It joined the European Union in 1986.

Portugal has a population of 10.5 million (2012), 48 percent male and 52 percent female (INE 2013). The country is urbanized and densely populated along the coastline, in particular in two main cities: Lisbon, the capital, and Oporto. In terms of age distribution, Portugal comprises 14.9 percent children (aged 14 and under), 66.1 percent active population (aged 15–64), and 19 percent older adults (aged 65 and over; INE 2011). Statistically speaking, a family is defined as a private household: “a group of people living at the same dwelling and having a family relationship (*de jure* or *de facto*), occupying all or part of a dwelling; or a single person that fully or partly occupies a dwelling” (INE 2003). Guests with maintenance obligations or shared income permanently cohabiting in the dwelling may also be considered part of

the household, as may domestic personnel. In 2011, Portugal had 4,043,726 families (INE 2011). Of these families, 38 percent were nuclear or conjugal families, 22 percent were couples without children, 19 percent were single-person families, 11 percent were single-parent families, and 10 percent were other types. The average number of people per family has been decreasing since 1920. In 1920, Portugal had an average of 4.2 people per family, whereas in 2011 the average was 2.6 (INE 2013). This decline is mostly due to a steady decrease in the birth and fertility rates.

Like most developed countries, Portugal is experiencing demographic trends of increased aging and a slowdown in population growth. The birth rate in Portugal was 8.5 per 1000 population in 2012, having fallen from 24.1 in 1960 (INE 2013). The average age of Portuguese mothers at the time of birth of the first child was 29.5 years in 2012, compared to 25 years in 1960 (INE 2013). Similarly, the general fertility rate was 36.3 live births per women aged 15–49 in 2012 but in 1990 it was 46.5 (INE 2013). A total fertility rate of around 2.1 live births per woman is considered to be the average number that will keep a population size constant if there is no inward or outward migration; this is also known as the population replacement level (Eurostat 2013). The Portuguese total fertility rate was 1.28 in 2012, which is below the population replacement level (INE 2013). Several factors explain the low fertility rates in Portugal: socioeconomic development and the need for family planning; a lowered infant mortality rate, which has reduced the need to have more children because it was expected that some would die young; an improved social security system, which has decreased the need to have children as a way to support oneself in old age; changes in women’s status

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resulting from their entering the workforce; and greater access to contraception and family planning services (Amaro 2005; 2014).

In 2012, 34,423 marriages were celebrated in Portugal – corresponding to a crude marriage rate of 3.3 per 1000 inhabitants (INE 2012). The number of marriages has been declining since 1975. This decrease might relate to a lower social pressure for marriage as a social norm for couples, particularly due to the acknowledgment of alternative co-residence options such as “de facto” arrangements. In addition, Portuguese marriages are usually expensive ceremonies. The possibility for same-sex marriage was passed into law in 2010, as a result of changing public opinion about homosexuality (Amaro 2014). In 2012 the average age at first marriage for women was 32.3 years, whereas for men it was 34.7 years (INE 2013). According to the 2011 census, 53 percent of the Portuguese adult population were married, 7 percent were widowed, 4 percent were divorced, and the remainder were single (INE 2011). In 2012, the crude divorce rate was 2.4 per 1000 inhabitants (INE 2013). Divorce can be obtained by mutual consent (agreement of both spouses to the dissolution of the marriage, where no reason is required) or by a contested action (filed in court by one of the spouses, invoking a de facto separation for more than one year or the absence of the spouse without news for over one year; changes in the mental status of the spouse implying the impossibility of living together; or other events that show a definite break in the marriage). In the mid-twentieth century, divorce, even if legally obtained, was associated with stigma and social discrimination (Amaro 2005).

KINSHIP RULES AND PATTERNS

Kinship is defined in the Portuguese Civil Code as the relationship between two or more

people who share a common ancestry (based on consanguinity). There is also kinship by affinity, which results from marriage – that is, the bonds created with the relatives of the spouse. The Portuguese kinship system is descriptive and includes a name for each kinship relationship, both male and female forms. The system is patrilineal (valuing the male lineage), but both genders are treated equally before the law. The Civil Code regulates kinship relations with no gender differences. When children are born, they receive a first name followed by the mother’s family name and then the father’s family name. It is important to determine kinship for the purpose of marriage and inheritance. In the Portuguese system, degrees of kinship are counted as one per person in the kinship line excluding the common ancestor. The rule applies in both forms of kinship – consanguinity and affinity. However, Roman Catholic canon law is different: degrees of kinship are counted by generation, which means that direct cousins are fourth-degree relatives according to Portuguese law, but second-degree relatives according to Roman Catholic law.

Besides these two forms of kinship, relationships resulting from social ties between godparents and godchildren are also significant in Portugal. Godparents and godchildren have a relationship that is considered similar to the relationship between parents and children. Being a godparent implies a set of lifetime responsibilities such as social support, whereas being a godchild implies loyalty and care. Similarly, the parents of the child establish a relationship of comradeship with the godfather of their child (they become *compadres*). This comradeship relationship is also established between the two sets of parents of a couple. The traditional idea of the godparent protecting the godchild was captured in a 2009 law that allows any citizen or family member to care for a child who needs

protection as a surrogate godparent (being a form of civil foster parent). The rights and duties are similar to those in the parent–child relationship, but the relationship is legally different from an adoption.

Monogamous marriage is the rule in Portugal, and since 2010 same-sex marriage has been legal. Nonmarital cohabitation is legally recognized, and after two years of cohabitation the law recognizes similar rights to those of married people (“de facto” status). Men and women are free to select their partners, but families, especially upper-class ones, exert discreet surveillance of their offspring to avoid links that somehow would affect their economic, cultural, or social capital. Both men and women have the right to divorce their partners. Both spouses share decisions in married life, but the traditional association of housework and child care with women still exists. Housework and child care duties are still not equally shared between men and women, despite greater gender equality in the domestic domain (Amaro 2005).

In Portugal, there is no established residence rule. The newlywed couple is expected to form an independent residence, but some studies have shown a tendency for quasi-matrilocal residence (i.e., residence close to the woman’s mother; Amaro 2005). This tendency is related to gendered social support, since the mother usually assists her daughter and grandchildren, especially when grandchildren are born. This greater proximity to a woman’s relatives is also visible when senior caregiving is needed. Couples are more likely to support the woman’s older parents than the man’s.

SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT

The Roman Catholic church has had a strong influence on Portuguese family composition and society at large throughout Portugal’s history. The influence of the Roman Catholic

religion has been felt in the constitution of the family, social norms of sexuality, and divorce. Although the first divorce law dates back to 1910, the divorce rate remained substantially low until 1975 due to an agreement between the Portuguese state and the Vatican signed in 1940. This agreement (“Concordata”) disallowed the divorce of married people, in accordance with the rites of the Roman Catholic church. This situation only changed in 1975, after the political revolution of 1974, which ended a 41-year dictatorship. But changes in the traditional family structure began to occur in the late 1960s, mainly because of the country’s industrialization (e.g., Portugal was a founding member of the European Free Trade Association in 1960). The phenomenon of industrialization, the colonial war that began in Angola in 1961 (which meant that men had to serve in the army), and the emigration of men to other European countries led women to enter the workforce. This allowed women to gain more autonomy and promoted a social change in terms of the conservative notion of family, marriage, and gender. These changes were accelerated after the political revolution of 1974.

Portugal is a secular country but 81 percent of Portuguese people are Roman Catholic, although only 19 percent attend mass regularly (INE 2011). Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic religion continues to play an important role in family life. Other Christian churches represent merely 3.3 percent of the Portuguese population, and we can find other religious minorities: 0.03 percent are Jews, 0.2 percent are Muslims, and 0.3 percent belong to other non-Christian religions (INE 2011).

Culturally the country is fairly homogeneous, displaying a few regional differences. There is, however, a small minority of approximately 20,000 Portuguese gypsies (INE 2011) who maintain their ancestral traditions and sometimes defy the laws of the

state with respect to family matters. This group values women's virginity at the time of marriage, does not allow marriages outside the gypsy group, and restricts freedom in mate selection. This community favors arranged marriages, and men are the heads and authority of the family. The Portuguese gypsies continue to be seminomadic and are usually not well socially integrated, often being stigmatized and discriminated against by local communities. Ethnically, the country is also very homogeneous and the majority of the population is of European origin. Immigrants account for 4 percent of the population and are mainly from the former Portuguese colonies of Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe. Since the 1990s, Portugal has received a significant group of immigrants from Romania and Ukraine (SEF 2012).

Regarding marriage policies, the legal age of marriage is fixed at 16 years for both genders. Nonmarital cohabitation is recognized by the state, and legislation protects the rights of people who cohabit (as with married people), ensuring, for example, the right to housing, to a similar tax regime, and to social protection in case of the death of one partner. Same-sex marriage has been allowed since 2010, but without the possibility of adopting or co-adopting children. Although antagonism against same-sex couples has been decreasing since the 1990s, Portuguese society is still fairly homophobic. Abortion is legal, and, despite the Roman Catholic church's strong opposition, the Portuguese parliament passed a law to legalize abortion on demand in 2007. This law gives women the right to choose, and abortion can be induced at no cost at public health centers. Until 2007, abortions were allowed only in cases of rape or of a health risk to the mother.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Portugal has significantly improved the standard of living of its citizens since around the 1970s. The GDP per capita was €56.2 in 1960 and reached €16,259 in 2010 (INE 2013). However, both GDP growth and the disposable income of households have been affected by the global crisis that began in 2008. Portugal has also been facing a decreasing influx of immigrants, due to the crisis and changes in migration patterns (such as Brazilian immigrants returning to Brazil because of its economic development; SEF 2012). Out-migration shows a different trend: the number of Portuguese emigrants has increased, largely due to the economic crisis. In 2012, Portugal had 11.5 percent emigrants per 1000 inhabitants, which was 1.9 percent more than in 2011 (INE 2013).

In 2012, 25.3 percent of Portuguese people were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (INE 2013); such people are entitled to a package of social policies designed to support low-income families. In 2011, the Gini index, used to measure the inequality of income, was 34.5 percent and the inequality of income distribution (ratio of the total income received by the 20 percent of the population with the highest income to that received by the 20 percent of the population with the lowest income, or S80/S20) was 5.8 (INE 2013), which means that there is a considerable gap between the Portuguese richest and poorest: the 20 percent of the population with the highest income earns almost six times as much as the bottom 20 percent. In terms of sectors of economic activity, 10 percent of the Portuguese labor force works in the primary sector, 27 percent in the second sector, and 63 percent in the tertiary sector (INE 2011).

After the 1974 revolution, which ended a long-term dictatorship, the Portuguese Constitution (1976) expressed the principle

of equal gender rights. In a few decades women's participation in the labor market augmented considerably, also because Portuguese low salaries created a need for dual-earner households. Compared to other European countries, Portugal has a high rate of full-time female employment regardless of marital status or age of children. But there is still a significant gender pay gap. And, despite having full-time jobs, women are also disproportionately responsible for unpaid domestic work and child care (Torres 2008). Although access to political activity is universal according to the constitution, because of traditional political party systems and low levels of political activity by women, Portugal introduced a quota policy in 2006: the Parity Act established a minimum level of representation of 33 percent for each sex in the electoral lists for the Portuguese parliament, the local government, and the European Parliament.

The Portuguese Constitution also established the right to universal public healthcare, regardless of economic and social background. All Portuguese residents have access to public healthcare provided by the National Health Service, which is mostly supported through general taxation. Co-payments have been increasing, especially due to the rising expenditure on healthcare. Public healthcare services are mainly based on primary and hospital care, whereas pharmaceuticals, diagnostic technologies, and private practices are mostly based on private provision. Additionally, people might have extra layers of health insurance coverage provided by health subsystems and voluntary health insurance funded by employee and employer contributions (Barros, Machado, and Simões 2011).

SEE ALSO: Aging of the World's Population; Child Care in the United States; Christianity

and Families; Dual-Earner Couples in the United States; Europe, Families in; Family Structure; Gender and Household Labor; Guardianship in the United States; Kinship; Work and Families in the United States

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