

Social Implications caused by the Marriage-Divorce Relationship: Case of Ecuador

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Abstract

The sociology of the family seeks to understand how family relationships influence and are influenced by the broader social structure. The concept of family has been the subject of numerous debates, with different theoretical perspectives providing different interpretations of its role in society. The study was based on data collected by the Ecuadorian Institute of Statistics and Censuses on marriages and divorces for the year 2022. Our results demonstrate that marriage practices can vary significantly between different regions and ethnic groups in the country. This could influence divorce rates. Divorce can have a significant impact on people's lives, both emotionally and financially. In the same way, it can affect family dynamics, financial situation, and even the well-being of children.

Keywords: *Social implications, marriage-divorce relationship, Ecuador.*

Introduction

(Demir & Drentea, 2016a) The family is one of the oldest and most fundamental institutions of human societies. It functions as the first cell of socialization, where individuals learn roles, norms, values, and behaviors that are expected of them in the larger society. Over time, the structure, function, and dynamics of the family have undergone significant changes, influenced by economic, political, technological, and cultural factors. In this sense, from a sociological perspective, the study of the family not only addresses its internal structure, but also how it interacts and relates to other social institutions, such as education, religion, and the economy (Brown, 2019) (Антонов & Antonov, 2018)

The concept of family has been the subject of numerous debates, with different theoretical perspectives providing different interpretations of its role in society, while functionalists, for example, consider the family as an essential institution that provides stability and social cohesion for which conflict theorists see the family as an essential institution that provides stability and social cohesion. On the other hand, feminist perspectives have highlighted how traditional family structures can reproduce gender

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roles and patriarchal inequalities (May et al., 2022) (Ntoimo & Odimegwu , 2020) (Şentürk Dizman , 2021) (Bibeau , 2020)

With technological advances and globalization, the landscape of the family has evolved, introducing new family forms and structures, such as reconstituted, single-parent or same-sex families. These changes have led sociology to reconsider and redefine the notion of family, adapting to contemporary realities the family, in its interaction with the broader social structure, plays a crucial role in the formation and transformation of society through the sociological lens, we can unravel the patterns, dynamics, and tensions that underlie family relationships, providing a deep understanding of the interaction between individual, family, and society. (Itao & Kaneko, 2021) (Baranova , 2022) (Knapp & Wurm, 2019)

Main Sociological Theories Dealing with the Family

As an essential part of the social structure, the family has been the subject of study since the beginning of sociology. Several theories have emerged to explain and understand the dynamics, structure, and function of this social unit in the broader context of society. These theories provide different but complementary views on the family and how it interacts with other social systems (from Singly , 2021a) (Demir & Drentea , 2016b)

Functionalism and the Family

Functionalism is a sociological theory that has significantly influenced the understanding of society and its institutions, in this sense Pearson is one of the main exponents of functionalism, this perspective sees society as a complex system composed of interdependent parts that contribute to the functioning and balance of the whole in this context, The family plays an essential role. The family, from the functionalist perspective, fulfills various functions in society. , for this reason the family is a universal institution that performs essential functions, including the reproduction and socialization of the new generations. Socialization, in particular, is a key process in which family members transmit values, norms, and social roles to children, preparing them for their integration into the wider society (Beck & Grayot , 2021) (Wenzel , 2001) (Ormerod , 2020) (Way , 2018) (Kovalenko , 2020)

In addition to socialization, the family also fulfills an emotional stabilization function, providing emotional and affective support to its members this contributes to the emotional stability of individuals and ultimately to the balance of society as a whole. maintenance of order and social cohesion. (Joksić & Rajaković , 2020) (Unegbu , 2019) (Dimitrijević, 2014)

Conflict Theory: Family and Inequality

Conflict theorists, largely inspired by the ideas of Marx, see the family as a reflection of the tensions and inequalities present in the wider society. Conflict theory, in sociology, focuses on social inequalities, power conflicts and problems of access to resources. From this perspective, the family is seen as an institution that reflects and perpetuates existing inequalities in society, on the other hand, the family can be considered to be an institution that serves to maintain and reproduce capitalist relations of production. (Outhwaite , 2021) (Zuldin , 2019)

Conflict theory holds that the family is intrinsically related to economic inequality and that, as an institution, the family consolidates economic inequalities by transmitting property and capital from one generation to the next. Women are subordinate to men and are assigned an unpaid caregiver role during the capitalist system, this type of gender inequality in the family contributes to gender inequality in general. (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2019) (Kushins & Behounek , 2020)

In addition, conflict theory also highlights the importance of education in the reproduction of social inequality by taking up Bourdieu who argues that the family social inequality, transmitting advantages and disadvantages through socialization and education, must also consider the cultural and economic resources of the family influence the access of individuals to education and, Therefore, in its life opportunities finally from the perspective of conflict theory, the family is seen as an institution that reflects and perpetuates the social and economic inequalities existing in society. This theory highlights the role of property, inheritance, gender inequality, and education in creating and reproducing inequalities in the family and, ultimately, in society at large. (Kühne & Leonardi , 2020) (Ferrare & Phillippo , 2021)

Feminism and the Critique of the Patriarchal Family

Feminist theorists have argued that traditional family structures can perpetuate and reinforce gender inequalities. The patriarchal family, according to this perspective, is built on the subordination of women, limiting their autonomy and reproducing traditional roles from the perspective of feminism and the critique of the patriarchal family, the institution of the family is analyzed as a space where gender inequality is perpetuated and reproduced, this vision is particularly influential in the sociology of gender and has been developed throughout the twentieth century as a critical response to the patriarchy, which is a system of male domination in society. (Risman , 2018) (Allagbé & Amoussou , 2020)

(Segato & McGlazer , 2018) In this approach, it is argued that the traditional family, characterized by the division of gender roles, has been a fundamental pillar of patriarchy. Feminist theorists such as Friedan and Millett have pointed out that the patriarchal family reinforces women's subordination by assigning them roles as caregivers and reproducers, limiting their opportunities in other areas of life. Dobash's assertion that the family is a place where unequal power relations can lead to violence and control towards women, the feminist critique also highlights the importance of gender socialization in the family. Gender norms and expectations transmitted in the family can reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and roles, limiting autonomy. (Holt, 2021) (Allen, 2016)

Symbolic Interactionism and the Construction of Family Reality

According to symbolic interactionism, the family is a set of relationships and shared meanings families are not static entities, but are constructed and reconstructed through communication and everyday experiences throughout history, sociological theories about the family have evolved to adapt to changing social realities are diverse perspectives, Symbolic Interactionism is a sociological theory that focuses on interaction and communication between individuals as the foundation of social reality. From this perspective, reality is not something objective and pre-existing, but is constructed through symbolic interaction and the interpretation of shared symbols and meanings. When we apply Symbolic Interactionism to the family, we see that family reality is not a static concept but a dynamic process that is constructed and reconstructed through the daily interactions between its members. For example, the simple act of calling a place "home" charges it with meaning and symbolism for family members. (Dennis & Martin, 2007) (Serpe et al., 2020) (Vasilyeva , 2023) (Asimakopoulos , 2022)

Board 1. Construction of Family Reality

Construction of Family Reality		
Symbols	Interaction	Negotiation
Words	Action	Family Roles
Gestures	Reaction	Standards

Rituals	Conservation	Values
Objects	Gestures	

Family members use symbols to communicate and give meaning to shared experiences, as can be seen in Table 1. For example, gestures, rituals, words, and familiar objects have symbolic meanings that affect how family reality is constructed. The distinctive family reality of that group is created by every act, reaction, conversation, and gesture; on the contrary, the negotiation of importance the family constantly discusses and reinterprets symbols and interactions. What a family considers "normal" or "acceptable" in terms of roles, norms, and values may be very different from what a different family considers from the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, family reality is constructed through interaction, symbols, and the negotiation of meanings, this theory highlights the importance of understanding how individuals create and reinterpret their family reality through constant communication and symbolic interaction (Elleström , 2023) (Kratcoski et al., 2020) (Torres et al., 2021) (MATSUKI, 2003) (Aksan et al., 2009)

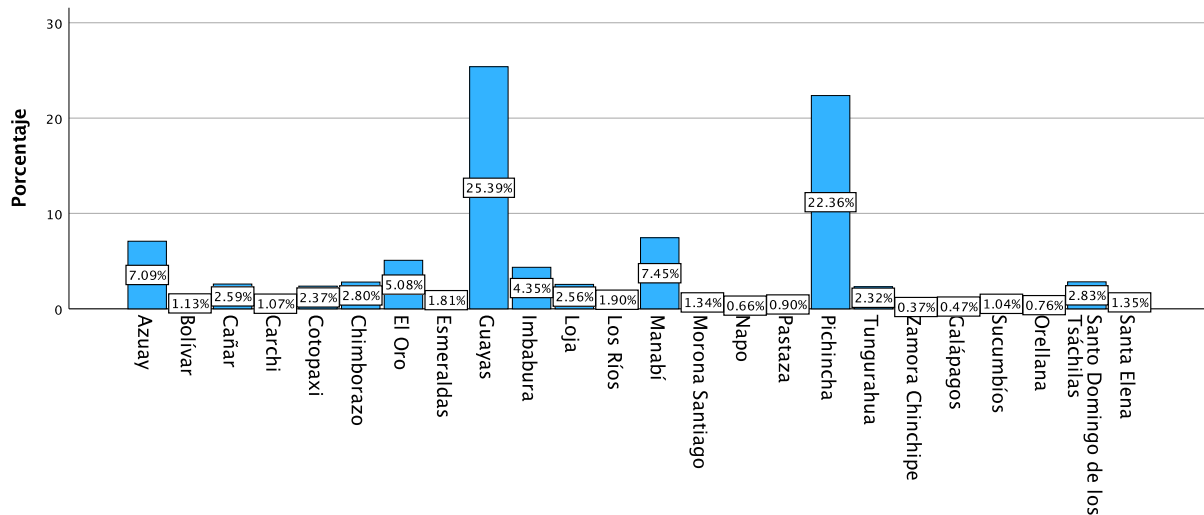
Methodology

The study was based on data collected by the Ecuadorian Institute of Statistics and Censuses on marriages and divorces for the year 2022. For the analysis of these data, IBM SPSS Statistics software version 29.01.0 was used(171). The statistical tests performed include the calculation of measures of central tendency, such as means and mode, as well as the Chi-square test.

Results

The most important results of our research can be seen below:

Figure 1. Marriage Registration Provinces 2022



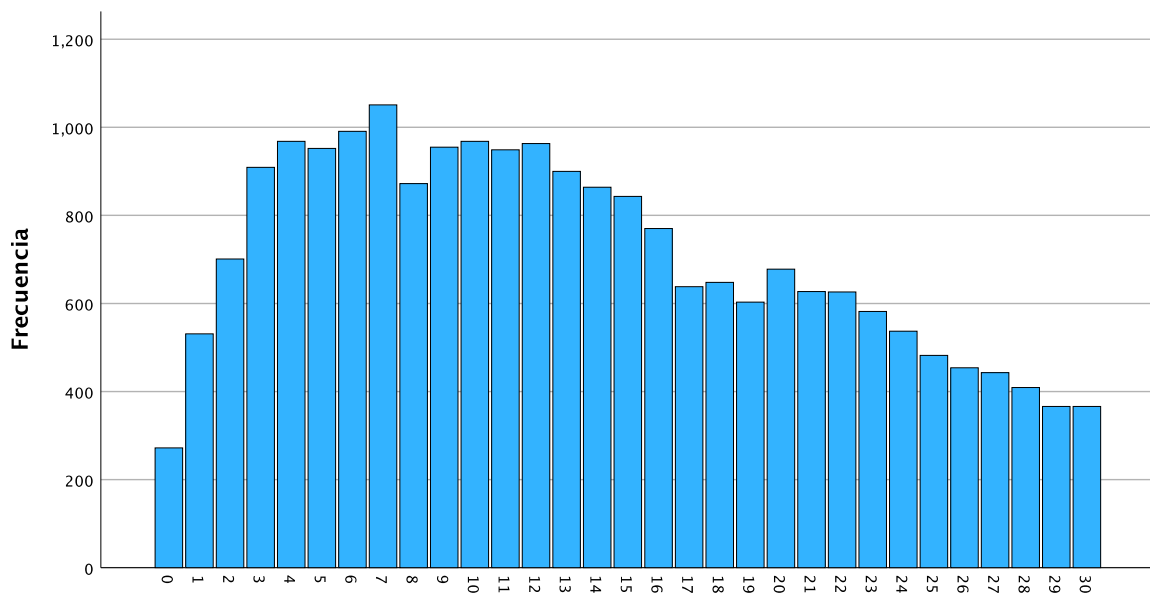
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on data extracted from the 2022 Matrix of Marriages of the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

A close look at Ecuador's 2022 marriage registration data from the country's 24 provinces reveals revealing patterns. The province of Guayas emerges as the undisputed leader, representing 25.39% of the total number of marriage registrations. It is followed by Pichincha, with a significant 22.36%, consolidating itself as the second province with the

highest number of marriages registered in this period. In third place is Manabí, with 7.45% of registrations, demonstrating its importance in the country's marriage structure.

These findings are critical to understanding the regional distribution of marriages in Ecuador, providing crucial information for designing policies and strategies that promote social welfare. They also make it possible to identify possible socio-cultural and economic variations between provinces, influencing marriage decisions. Not only does this statistical analysis provide an accurate view of demographic and social reality, but it can also serve as a basis for future research and studies that delve into the factors influencing marriage trends at the national level.

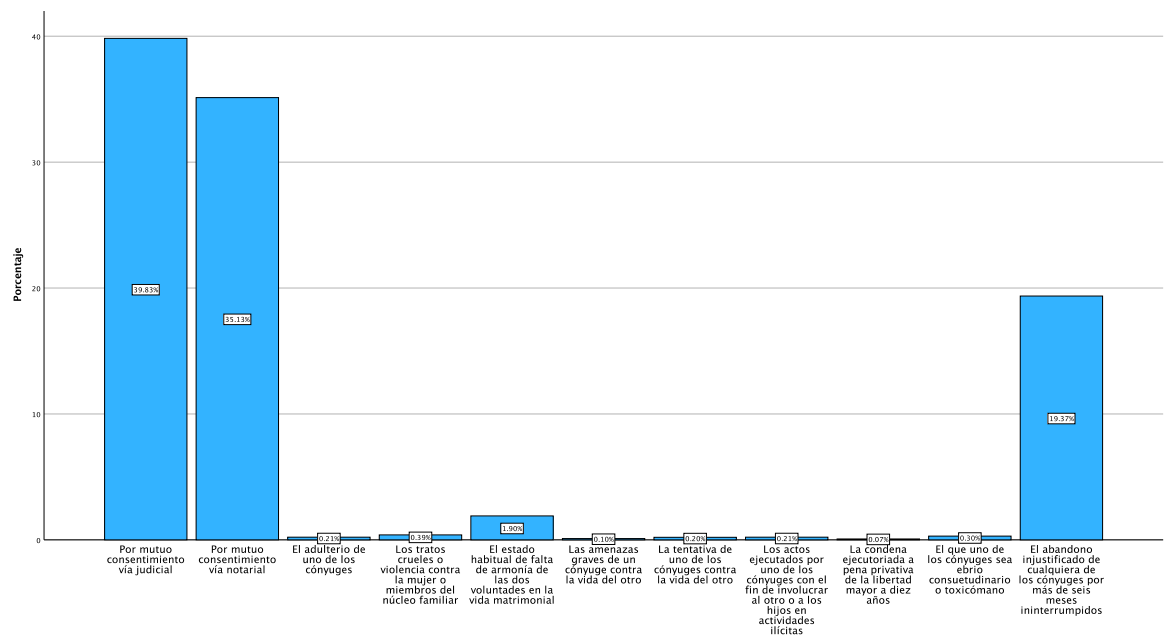
Figure 2. Duration of Marriages in Ecuador 2022



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on data extracted from the 2022 Matrix of Marriages of the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

After defining an age range from 0 to 30 years, and after carrying out a thorough analysis of the data using the powerful statistical tool SPSS, the relevant formula was applied to calculate the average. The results revealed that the average length of marriages in the year 2022 stands at approximately 16 years. This fact is of great relevance, as it sheds light on the stability of marital unions in this period. It is essential to consider these findings when addressing issues related to couple relationships, family dynamics, and social policies that may influence the length of marriages in the Ecuadorian population.

Figure 3. Grounds for Divorce by Mutual Consent



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on data extracted from the 2022 Matrix of Marriages of the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

When we delve into the analysis of the data related to the causes of divorce in Ecuador for the year 2022, interesting sociological trends become evident. Within the categories that determine divorce by mutual consent, separation by mutual consent through judicial means stands out, occupying the first place with a remarkable 39.83%. This figure reflects a trend towards the search for legal and structured solutions to end marital unions. However, it is crucial to note that this category is also positioned as fashion, denoting its preeminence by being the most common and conventional option.

In the second instance, we find the category of divorce by mutual consent via notary, which represents a significant 35.13%. This approach, although less frequent than the judicial route, reflects a search for efficiency and speed in the divorce process. Finally, the category of divorce due to the unjustified abandonment of either spouse for more than six interrupted months entails 25.04%. This category suggests that, in some cases, marital relationships can wear down due to a lack of commitment or communication between spouses.

This sociological data sheds light on family dynamics and the options available to Ecuadorian couples who opt for divorce. They reflect the importance of considering the legal context and individual circumstances when addressing this social phenomenon in today's Ecuadorian society. In addition, it provides a valuable foundation for future research that can further explore the underlying factors and implications of divorce decisions on society.

Table 1 Educational Level and Sex of the Divorced

Tabla cruzada													
Recuento													
		Nivel de Instrucción divorciado											Total
		Ningu no	Centro de alfabetiza ción	Jardín de Infantes	Prima ria	Educació n Básica	Secund aria	Educació n media / Bachiller ato	Superior no Universit ario	Superior Universit ario	Posgr ado	Sin informaci ón	
Sexo divorciado	Hom bre	50	18	208	1324	2642	2372	11455	1810	3343	221	275	23718
	Muje r	0	1	17	109	84	166	221	137	90	15	37	877
Total		50	19	225	1433	2726	2538	11676	1947	3433	236	312	24595

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on data extracted from the 2022 Matrix of Marriages of the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

In the analysis of the data collected, a finding emerges of great relevance to understand the dynamics of divorce in Ecuador during the year 2022. Both men and women who opted for divorce show a consistent pattern in terms of their level of education, with high school prevailing as the most significant data. This observation sheds light on the relationship between gender and educational attainment in the context of marital breakdowns in the country.

It is essential to note that this trend can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, it could suggest that people with a higher level of education have greater economic independence and are therefore more likely to make divorce decisions. On the other hand, it could also point to the need to foster education and awareness about relationships in order to strengthen marriage bonds in all populations.

This discovery is a fundamental piece for future sociological and demographic research, as it allows us to delve into the motivations behind divorce decisions and the role that education plays in relationships. In addition, it can serve as a basis for the development of policies and programs aimed at strengthening communication and conflict resolution skills in Ecuadorian couples, regardless of their educational level.

Discussion

The results obtained from the research determine the different theoretical and methodological scenarios on the separation of the family in Ecuador from the data on divorces in the year 2022, in this sense it can be considered that the most important data are those in figure 1 where they can determine the percentage of marriage registrations for the year 2022, In this sense, the formation of family nuclei can be considered, referring to the duration of marriages the most significant data, in this sense, The analysis reveals significant patterns that shed light on the dynamics of marital unions in the country, identifying that in the province of Guayas stands out as the undisputed leader in this aspect, Representing 25.39% of the total number of marriage registrations, this data highlights the importance of this region in the Ecuadorian marriage context in the province of Pichincha emerges as a significant province in terms of registered marriages, with a solid 22.36%.

This finding underlines the relevance of the capital, Quito, as a center of marital activity and suggests the existence of specific urban dynamics in marital decisions, followed by the province of Manabí, located in third place with 7.45% of registrations, it also provides

valuable information, referring to figure 2 shows that the context of the sociology of the family, The length of marriages is a key indicator that can shed light on family dynamics and relationships in a society. The fact that the average length of marriages in the year 2022 stands at approximately 16 years is a significant fact. This figure suggests a certain stability in marital unions in that period, which may have important sociological implications, these findings to analyze how various factors, such as social policies, cultural expectations, economic pressures, or gender dynamics, influence the duration of marriages in the Ecuadorian population. For example, they could investigate how family-friendly policies or cultural trends around marriage and divorce affect the stability of marital unions. (Presser , 2000) (Schmid & Wagner, 2023)

The relevant data from the sociological point of view, by highlighting the average length of marriages in Ecuador in 2022 and emphasizing the importance of considering these findings when addressing issues related to the sociology of the family and family dynamics in Ecuadorian society, as Figure 3 relates to sociological trends related to divorce in Ecuador in 2022 and has significant implications for dissolution of the family and its relationship with society. Regarding the dissolution of the family, the paragraph reveals that divorce cases in Ecuador are undergoing changes in the preferences and approaches of couples seeking to end their marriages (Swauger et al., 2022) (Rotkirch , 2018) (from Singly , 2021b) (Gamsö , 2016)

The first category, separation by mutual consent through judicial means, which ranks first with 39.83%, shows a trend towards the search for legal and structured solutions for divorce. This suggests that couples are opting for more formal and law-based divorce processes, the second category, divorce by mutual consent via notary, with 35.13%, reflects a search for efficiency and speed in the divorce process. This could be related to a desire to avoid protracted disputes or a longer court process, the third category, divorce due to the unjustified abandonment of either spouse, with 25.04%, noting that, in some cases, marital relations can deteriorate due to a lack of commitment or communication between spouses. This highlights the importance of family dynamics and relationship quality in the context of divorce (Cherlin , 2022) (Cherlin , 2022)

From a sociological point of view, these data suggest changes in the social and legal norms that govern divorce in Ecuador, they also indicate that couples are making divorce decisions in a more informed and reflective way. These findings are crucial to understanding how family dissolution relates to Ecuadorian society, as it reflects the evolving attitudes and options available to couples in the separation process. In addition, it provides a valuable basis for future sociological research that can further explore the underlying factors and implications of divorce decisions on society. (Swauger et al., 2022) (Cherlin , 2022) (Sheykhi , 2020)

With regard to family dissolution Table 2, this observation suggests that educational attainment may play an important role in divorce decisions. For example, people with a higher level of education may have greater economic independence and therefore be in a more favorable position to make divorce decisions, this could indicate greater autonomy in decision-making regarding marital relationships. (Baert & Van Der Straeten , 2021) (Fisher, 2022)

From a sociological perspective, this finding may also relate to gender norms and traditional roles in society people with more advanced education might be more willing to question traditional gender norms and have a greater awareness of the options available in terms of marital relationships, this finding is critical for future sociological and demographic research, as it can help to understand the motivations behind divorce decisions and the impact of educational attainment on relationships. In addition, it opens the door for the development of policies and programs aimed at strengthening communication and conflict resolution skills in Ecuadorian couples, regardless of their educational level, ultimately these efforts could contribute to mitigating divorce rates and

promoting healthier marital relationships in Ecuadorian society. (Fisher, 2022) (Mon, 2023) (Guinote & Cai , 2016) (Jose & Alfons, 2007)

Conclusions

The sociology of the family is a field of study that has evolved over many decades and has provided a deeper understanding of family dynamics and their role in society. The structure and functions of the family have undergone significant changes throughout history and continue to evolve today. Factors such as industrialization, urbanization, cultural transformations, and public policies have influenced the configuration of families. Similarly, there is a great diversity of types of families, including nuclear, extended, single-parent, and blended families, among other configurations. This family diversity reflects the different social and cultural circumstances in which families develop.

Families play a crucial role in the socialization of individuals, transmitting values, norms, and culture, as well as providing emotional and economic support to their members. The sociology of the family has analysed how these functions have evolved and adapted to the changing needs of society. It is a dynamic field that has provided valuable insight into how families adjust to and respond to social and cultural transformations. It also highlights the importance of understanding family dynamics when addressing social issues and formulating effective policies that promote the well-being of families in society.

However, families face situations of separation, which has resulted in an increasing trend in divorce rates in recent decades. This can be attributed to a variety of factors, such as changes in cultural, economic, and social norms that have reduced the stigmatization of divorce and simplified the legal processes of separation. In Ecuador, divorce was legalized in 1970. Up until that date, the country had very restrictive legislation regarding divorces. The legalization of divorce has allowed Ecuadorian couples to dissolve their marriages in a more accessible way.

Generally speaking, Ecuador is a culturally and ethnically diverse country, leading to significant variations in marriage practices among the country's different regions and ethnic groups. These cultural differences can influence different marriage traditions and divorce rates. Therefore, laws are enacted to protect the rights of couples in the event of divorce, including the division of property and child custody. However, these laws can vary and evolve over time. Divorce can have a significant impact on people's lives, both emotionally and financially. In addition, it can affect family dynamics and financial situation, as well as the lives of children, if any.

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