



Avoiding Marriage in Algeria, Causes and Repercussions

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Abstract:

*During the celebration of the **World Population Day**, organized by the Ministry of Health and Population under the slogan "Empowering Youth to Form a Prosperous and Hope-Filled Algerian Family," which falls on July 11th of every year, the phenomenon of **youth reluctance to marry** in Algeria was raised, a trend that is increasing day by day. Participants called for identifying the causes and consequences of this phenomenon and searching for ways to mitigate it by providing strategies that encourage youth marriage.*

Keywords: *Reluctance, marriage, divorce, celibacy, spinsterhood/bachelorhood (delayed marriage), population aging.*

Résumé :

Lors de la célébration de la Journée mondiale de la population, organisée par le ministère de la Santé et de la Population sous le slogan « Donner aux jeunes les moyens de former une famille algérienne prospère et pleine d'espoir », qui a lieu chaque année le 11 juillet, le phénomène de la réticence des jeunes à se marier en

Algérie a été évoqué, une tendance qui s'accroît de jour en jour. Les participants ont appelé à identifier les causes et les conséquences de ce phénomène et à rechercher des moyens de l'atténuer en proposant des stratégies qui encouragent le mariage des jeunes.

Mots clés : *Réticence, mariage, divorce, célibat, vie de célibataire (mariage tardif), vieillissement de la population.*



Introduction:

Several parties have warned of the growing phenomenon of **reluctance to marry** among both male and female youth in Algeria during the annual celebration of World Population Day on July 11th. In this context, **Nassereddine Hamouda**, a former expert at the National Office of Statistics, confirmed that "the reluctance of Algerian youth to marry raises many concerns, making it essential to study this social phenomenon and interpret it through specialized field research in the field of family and family formation" [1].

Statement of the Problem:

The youth's perspective on marriage has changed; its meaning and significance have shifted. Marriage is no longer perceived as an innate practice (*sunnah fitriyah*) and a healthy social phenomenon—the optimal way to satisfy biological and emotional needs, achieve psychological and social stability, and bear and raise children well to be a worthy successor. However, recently, the phenomenon of youth reluctance to marry has begun to escalate. The number of marriage contracts declined from **388,000** in **2013** to **279,000** in **2023**. Furthermore, the number of unmarried women over 30 years old reached **3,670,000** [2], leading young people to fear marriage and its responsibilities.

So, what are the reasons for the reluctance of youth to marry in Algeria? And what are its repercussions?

1. Causes of Reluctance to Marry:

1.1. Social Causes:

1.1.1. *Change in the Perception of Marriage:*

The society's view of marriage has changed. Marriage is no longer seen as a social project and a sacred relationship between two families before it is a relationship between two spouses. Marriage has become an individual decision made by the two parties, often without consulting the parents, except when announcing the engagement or during the wedding. Moreover, each family views marriage as a **struggle for dominance** over the marital family and adherence to the family of origin. Marriage is also no longer a priority for young people; instead, they strive to achieve the highest levels of education, secure employment, self-development, and an independent residence, while **postponing** the issue of marriage until circumstances become easier.

1.1.2. *Rising Divorce Rates:*

Divorce is considered the specter that haunts young people, discouraging them from pursuing marriage and even threatening marital life. Divorce rates have risen in recent years. According to the National Office of Statistics, the crude divorce rate reached **2.02 ‰** in **2023**, up from **1.52 ‰** in **2019**. The divorce rate relative to the number of marriages reached **33.5%** in **2023**, compared to **20.9%** in **2019**, and **19.80%** in **2018** [3]. Additionally, the phenomenon of **early divorce**—divorce shortly after marriage—has recently spread due to the revelations each party makes about the other's truths and hidden aspects. Each party has become fearful and distrustful of the other in the face of increasing divorce rates and early divorce.



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A popular saying circulating recently states: "In the summer, it's *Qato* (wedding cakes/celebration), and in the winter, it's *Bougato* (lawyers/courts)," meaning that after marrying in the summer, the resort to lawyers and court sessions begins in the winter.

1.1.3. Domestic Violence:

Many Algerian families suffer from either physical or verbal violence. This violence can be against women (husband's violence against his wife), against children (parents' violence against their children), or sometimes the husband's family's violence against the wife. Consequently, children realize the difficulties, ramifications, and problems associated with marriage, which makes them hesitant to pursue it, especially when the child is a witness to severe beatings and frequent quarrels within the family. These persistent quarrels remain firmly entrenched in the children's minds, causing them to recall these incidents repeatedly, thus leading to hesitation and fear regarding marriage.

1.1.4. Development of Communication Tools and Social Media:

Technological development has led to the advancement of mass media and social media platforms. Despite the fact that these tools have facilitated communication between individuals, reduced distances, and opened avenues for young people to socialize, they have also exposed flaws and widely opened the door to pleasure and gratification. This has allowed young men and women to find alternatives and potentially forgo marriage entirely. This issue may even lead

to addiction, known as "**Nomophobia**," making the prospect of marriage improbable. According to Hisham Attia . social media networks are characterized by:

- **Geographical reach:** There are no geographical boundaries; anyone involved or entering the network can contact any person anywhere in the world once they access the network.
- **Continuous updating and development.**
- **Diversity and flexibility.**
- **Freedom of access and exit and browsing various platforms and groups.**
- **Ease of interaction and exchange of opinions.**
- **Absence of time constraints; these networks can be accessed at any time.**

Facebook holds the first position globally because it allows communication with individuals and groups via voice and video, and they can also publish articles, photos, and videos.

1.2. Economic Causes:

1.2.1. Unemployment:

Unemployment is considered a social phenomenon that troubles all nations, but it is more exacerbated in developing countries, and Algeria is one of the countries suffering from this phenomenon. Unemployment has also emerged among degree holders, especially PhD holders, despite the state's efforts to create job opportunities and provide grants for unemployed degree holders. The unemployment rate fell to **9.7%** in 2024, after having been **11.7%** in 2018. It should be noted that these rates do not take into account non-permanent jobs, domestic work, or informal/uninsured



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work, which suggests that these percentages may be exaggerated.

Unemployment is a major obstacle to young people pursuing marriage, as work ensures an income that allows the family to sustain itself, provide for their children's livelihoods, and preserve their dignity. "In 2006, the age at first marriage reached **33.5 years for men** and **29.8 years for women**, as a result of advancements in education, women's entry into the workforce, and economic factors related to the housing crisis and unemployment" [4].

1.2.2. Housing:

Despite the state's efforts to provide housing for Algerian families, with the late Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika launching a project to construct one million housing units, and the government managing to build approximately one million units over the last two decades, the demand for housing is continuously increasing, and the housing crisis persists. One of the reasons for the increased demand for housing is the desire of newly formed families to obtain independent accommodation.

1.2.3. Marriage Costs:

Marriage costs are prohibitive, as the dowry (Mahr) is dependent on gold, whose prices are constantly rising, reaching more than **25,000 DZD per gram** in recent years, meaning the dowry exceeds the threshold of **500,000 DZD** (fifty million centimes), not to mention clothing, banquets, and other expenses. This causes young people to hesitate considerably, and perhaps even despair, because accumulating these sums requires a long time.

1-2-4. Decline in Purchasing Power:

Obtaining a job and a house does not guarantee a comfortable life, as living has become difficult. Despite the fact that the individual income in Algeria reached approximately \$5320 in 2025 [5], according to the World Bank, which is the highest compared to neighboring countries, and the government's attempts to raise wages every year, this is insufficient in the face of inflation, the depreciation of the Algerian dinar, and the rising cost of goods, which means a decline in purchasing power every year.

1.3. Cultural Causes:

1.3.1. Length of Study Period:

An individual spends a long period in education, at least five or ten compulsory years until they reach 16 years of age, especially if they wish to complete their higher education to obtain a degree. This takes a longer time, possibly up to 17 or 18 years in addition to the age of school entry. This means the individual completes their studies at the age of at least **24 years**, which is what most young people strive for to obtain a higher degree (Master's or Doctorate). This offers them better opportunities for employment or for receiving the unemployment grant recently provided by the government to degree holders.

1.3.2. High Educational Level of Women:

Algerian women have been able to pursue education, benefiting from the compulsory and free nature of schooling as per Ordinance 76, and have reached the highest educational levels, and even high-ranking positions. Zouhour Ounissi was a Minister of Education in the eighties



Soumission : 11/05/2025 Acceptation : 15/07/2025 Publication : 25/08/2025

of the last century. Now, the percentage of female students has exceeded that of male students in most Algerian universities, where, according to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the percentage of male students reached 37% compared to 63% of female students. This directly affects women's fertility, as the National Office of Statistics and the Ministry of Health and Population's National Survey on Maternal and Child Health in 2002 indicated that the number of children per woman decreases as the woman's educational level increases.

Educational Level	Illiterat	Primary	Intermediate	Secondary
Average number of children per woman	5	2.8	2.3	1.8

Source: The National Office of Statistics, Ministry of Health and Population. The National Family Health Survey 2002, (Preliminary Results), Algiers, 2003, p. 23.

1.3.3. High Educational Attainment of Women

The **high educational level of a woman** often leads her to look down upon a man with a lower educational level, a phenomenon observed in daily reality. This results in **young men hesitating to propose** to a woman who surpasses them academically, either out of fear of rejection or fear of domination after marriage.

Conversely, a woman **hesitates to marry a man of a lower caliber** because she feels he is not her equal, or perhaps she would be embarrassed by him in front of her colleagues. She

may search for a better and more suitable partner. However, as she ages, she often **accepts the first suitor**, sometimes even one with no educational background. Meanwhile, others prefer to remain **single or spinster** rather than marry someone with whom they cannot communicate. **Remaining unmarried is seen as better than a bad marriage.**

1.3.4. Disparity in Cultural Level

The disparity in educational attainment between men and women presents an obstacle to marriage. However, the true difference lies not so much in the **educational level** as in the **cultural level**. A high cultural level in one partner enables them to **understand and appreciate the other**, and they do not hesitate to seek marriage. Conversely, if one partner's culture is limited, they may not accept the superiority of the other. **This is particularly true for men**, who may feel sensitive about a woman, especially his wife, surpassing him in cultural level.

2. Repercussions of Reluctance to Marry (Marriage Delay)

2.1. Rise in the Average Age at First Marriage

The average age at first marriage reached **33.5 years for males and 29.8 years for females in 2006**. This figure slightly decreased with improved economic and social conditions from 2010 until 2019. However, it quickly resumed its upward trend, reaching **28.9 years for women and 35.5 years for men [6]**.

2.2. Singleness and Spinsterhood

Concerns are growing regarding the increasing number of women who remain unmarried (**spinsterhood**), a result of young men's reluctance to marry. The number of unmarried



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women over 30 years old is expected to reach **367,000 women in 2025** .according to the National Office of Statistics.

The rising average age at first marriage translates to a **shorter marriage duration and, consequently, lower fertility**, meaning fewer children. The number of children per woman has declined from **2.83 children in 2023 [7]** to **2.1 children in 2025**.

In reality, **spinsterhood alone is not the sole threat** to society; **singleness** in general also threatens Algerian society, perhaps even more so than spinsterhood. It **opens the doors to deviance, drug addiction, theft, and other social ills**.

2.2. Population Aging

After experiencing a demographic explosion in the 1980s, the Algerian society saw a decline in fertility at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. However, fertility rates quickly rose again starting in 2008 amid political stability and economic recovery. Recently, though, fertility has declined, and the proportion of the population aged over **60 years has begun to increase, reaching 10.5% in 2023** .

Similarly, the proportion of the population under 15 years old has decreased, reaching **29.3%**, down from **30.3% in 2024** and **11.3% in 2025 [8]**. These indicators suggest a decline in fertility and an increase in the proportion of the elderly population, **signaling population aging in the future**.

2.3. Social Deviance

Marriage is considered a source of **shelter and stability** for young people, as it commits them to the marital relationship and their children. Their duty becomes striving to earn a living for themselves and their children. However, if a young man is single or a woman is unmarried, **the gates of temptation are open**, and the terrible void is the key to all moral lapses.

Therefore, reluctance to marry will lead to the **spread of social scourges and vices**. Foremost among these is **sexual deviance**, especially with the availability of pornographic channels through various media and social networks. Many young people, and even middle-aged adults, may find an alternative for sexual gratification.

However, the affliction that has begun to increasingly worsen is sexual deviance, where each gender tends toward its own for sexual gratification. Here, a man tends toward another man to have sex with him, a phenomenon known as sodomy. Similarly, a woman tends toward another woman to have sex, a phenomenon known as lesbianism. This represents the escalation of sexual disorder amidst a weakening of religious restraint and social control.

2.4. Infertility:

Infertility rates have increased in recent years. Figures indicate that 40% of those suffering from infertility are men. This phenomenon also affects women under 35, an age not far from the average age at first marriage, which implies a reduction in the fertility period and a decline in childbirth. Furthermore, newlyweds suffer from a fear of infertility, as many couples, after just one year of marriage, become haunted by the fear of infertility – a condition experienced



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by many couples. This makes the marriage covenant fragile, and the consideration of divorce a constant possibility.

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