

# Divorce

Introduction and basics

# Rising divorce rate

- Divorce rate =
  - No. of divorces per 1000 married people per year
- Increase from 27, 000 in 1961 – 171,000 in 1999
- About 40% of marriages end in divorce
- Many reasons for rise in divorce rate
  - Changes in the law as an important reason

# Changes in Divorce Law

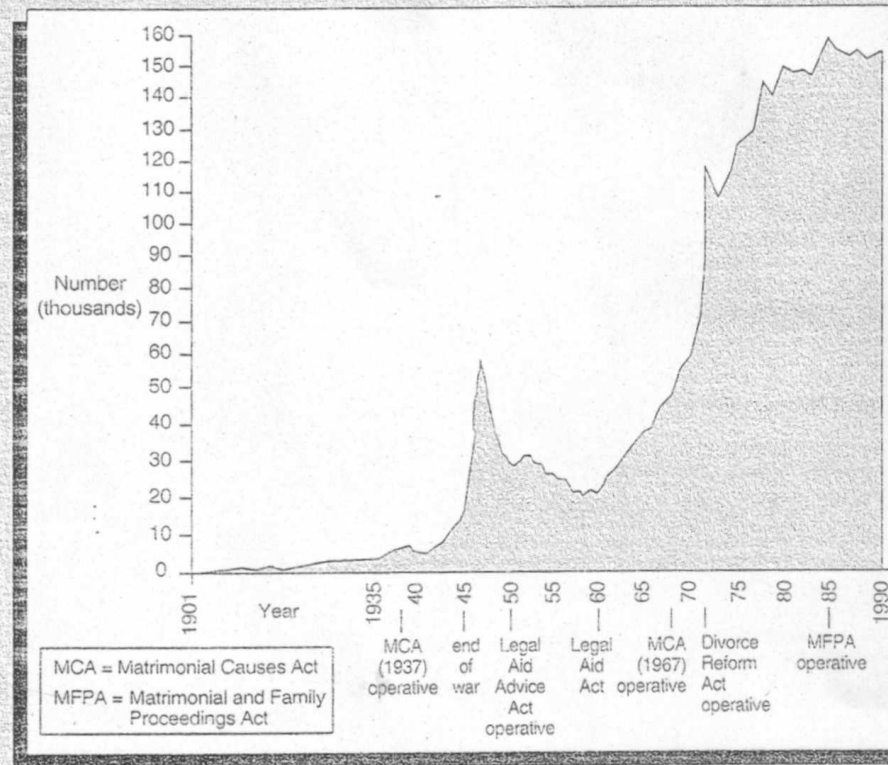
- Before 1857: act of parliament required for each divorce
- 1857 – Men had more rights than women in divorce
  - Notion of “matrimonial offence”
- 1923 – Women given equal rights with men
- 1949 – Financial assistance with solicitor’s & court fees

# More changes in divorce law

- 1969 – “irretrievable breakdown”
  - (1971) 2 years of separation
- 1984 – only one year of marriage necessary before divorce (previously 3 years)
- 1996 – (1999) increase to 18 months marriage necessary
  - compulsory marriage counselling (dropped 2001)

### Item C

## Divorce: decrees absolute in England and Wales 1901-1990



MCA = Matrimonial Causes Act

MFPA = Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act

Adapted from A. Wilson *Family*, 1985 and *Social Trends*, 1993  
and 1994