



stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X44, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa, ISibalo House, Koch Street, Salvokop, Pretoria, 0002
www.statssa.gov.za, info@statssa.gov.za, Tel +27 12 310 8911

STATISTICAL RELEASE

P0307

Marriages and divorces

2020

Embargoed until:
24 March 2022
10:00

ENQUIRIES:

Tshwaro Gae
079 511 9917

FORTHCOMING ISSUE:

Marriages and divorces, 2021

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE:

March 2023

Dipalopalo tsa Aforikaborwa • Dipalopalo tsa Aforika Borwa • Ezazibalo zaseNingizimu Afrika • Tshitatistika Afrika Tshipembe • Tinhlayo Afrika-Dzonga

Statistieke Suid-Afrika • Dipalopalo tsa Aforika Borwa • Telubalo zaseNingizimu Afrika • EzeeNkcukacha maNani zoMzantsi Afrika • Iimbalobalo zeSewula Afrika

IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH DATA ECOSYSTEMS



PREFACE

This statistical release presents information on civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions that were registered in 2020 in the South African national marriage registration system maintained by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). It highlights trends in the number of marriages and unions as well as demographic and other dynamics amongst married partners. The release also reports on divorces that were granted in 2020 by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DOJ&CD). It focuses on trends in divorces; demographic and occupational characteristics of the plaintiffs; age at the time of divorce; duration of marriage at the time of divorce and divorces involving couples with children less than 18 years. The information on marriages and divorces is important for understanding the formation and dissolution of marriage relationships and implications on the household structure and composition.

Risenga Maluleke
Statistician-General

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KEY FINDINGS

1. Introduction

There are three main sources of marriage and divorce statistics in South Africa; namely, those compiled from population censuses; household sample surveys and administrative data (i.e. those compiled from civil registration systems and administrative records). The data from these sources provides information on different aspects of marriages and divorces in the country. Census and survey data are by nature subjective, information provides cross-sectional data on individuals' marital status (never married, married, divorced, widowed, etc.). Marriages and divorces in this report cover different types of marriages and associated divorces that took place at different periods in people's lives but registered/granted in 2020. The 2020 mid-year population estimates [(*Mid-year population estimates, 2020* (statistical release P0302))] are used to calculate crude rates in the report.

Unlike in census and survey data, registered marriages and divorces data are based on the continuous recording of these events as they take place. Not all marriages are registered in South Africa, as some are not recognised by law. The three types of marriages that are recognised by law include civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) is responsible for managing registered marriages and unions under the following legislations:

- Civil marriages are administered through the Marriages Act, 1961 (Act No. 25 of 1961) as amended, and its associated regulations.
- Customary marriages are governed by the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, 1998 (Act No. 120 of 1998) that came into effect on 15 November 2000.
- The Civil Union Act, 2006 (Act No. 17 of 2006) that came into operation on 30 November 2006, governs civil unions (relationships between same-sex couples that are legally recognised by state authority). The act accommodates persons who cannot or wish not to enter into a marriage under the Marriage Act, 1961.

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) publishes data on marriages for South African citizens and permanent residents that are collected through the civil registration systems of the DHA. Before 2008, the data in the annual release of *Marriages and divorces* (statistical release P0307) covered only civil marriages. However in 2009, Stats SA started publishing available data on customary marriages and civil unions. The registration of customary marriages and civil unions began in 2003 and 2007 respectively.

The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DOJ&CD) is responsible for handling matters relating to the dissolution of registered marriages (civil and customary) and civil unions. This responsibility of the department is mandated through:

- The Divorce Act, 1979 (Act No.70 of 1979), as amended; and
- The Jurisdiction of Regional Courts Amendment Act, 2008 (Act No. 31 of 2008), which came into effect on 9 August 2010.

Data on divorces are obtained from various regional courts that deal with divorce matters. The data are based on successful divorce cases that have been issued with a decree of divorce. Divorce cases came from marriages that were registered in different years as well as divorce cases that were filed in different years but whose divorce decrees were granted in 2020. It should be noted that although both the data on the marriages and divorces are collected in the same year, the data sets are not linked to each other.

2. Marriages

2.1 Civil marriages

2.1.1 Trends in the registration of civil marriages (2011 – 2020)

Information provided in Table 1, on page 21, shows that 89 338 civil marriages of South African citizens and permanent residents were registered at the Department of Home Affairs in 2020. Table 1 further shows that the number of registered marriages consistently declined in the ten-year period (2011 to 2020), except for a slight increase of 0,6% between 2015 and 2016. During the period 2011 to 2020, the highest number of marriages was recorded in 2011 (167 264) and the lowest number in 2020 (89 338). It is too early to know the impact the coronavirus pandemic, but the 2020 figure of 89 338 civil marriages shows a decrease of 31,1% from the 129 597 marriages recorded in 2019. The seasonal monthly variation in the registration of civil marriages is observed in Figure 1 on page 9. Generally, the warmer months (beginning from September and peaking in December) are the most popular months for solemnising marriages in South Africa. In 2020, the highest number of marriages [13 957 (15,6%)] took place in December and the lowest number of marriages, [384 (0,4%)] occurred in April. The solemnised marriages were less than 1% in April and May 2020 since there was a hard lockdown in the country and only few couples could solemnise their marriages. The number of recorded marriages in May was 621 (0,7%).

2.1.2 Solemnisation of civil marriages

The Marriage Act, 1961 (Act No. 25 of 1961) requires that only licensed marriage officers solemnise civil marriages and issue a marriage certificate. Civil marriages are generally solemnised by civil marriage officers at the offices of the DHA and by religious marriage officers at chapels or religious buildings. After a solemnisation ceremony, the marriage officer issues the couple with an abridged hand-written marriage certificate, at no cost, and submits to the marriage register at the DHA office where he/she is registered, for the recording of the marriage particulars in the National Population Register (NPR).

Table 2 on page 22 shows the distribution of civil marriages registered in 2020 according to the way in which the marriage was solemnised. Under 'way of solemnisation', the terms: (i) 'DHA' is used for marriages solemnised by civil marriage officers and (ii) 'Religious' for marriages solemnised by priests/religious persons who are marriage officers. It is observed that more than half, 52 265 (58,5%) of the 89 338 marriages were solemnised by DHA marriage officers and 26 535 (29,7%) by 'Religious' rites. The type of solemnisation rite was not specified in 10 538 (11,8%) marriages. Table 2 further shows that 325 (0,4%) marriages of South African citizens and permanent residents were solemnised outside the borders of South Africa but subsequently registered in South Africa. In 2020, the observed crude civil marriage rate was 150 per 100 000 estimated resident population¹.

The table also provides information on provincial variations in marriage registration. The province of registration is not necessarily the province of usual residence of the couple since couples could marry at any place of their choice. The results further indicate that, in 2020, the highest number of marriages was registered in Gauteng [22 019 (24,6%)] and the lowest in Northern Cape [2 798 (3,1%)]. Looking at ways of marriage solemnisation within each province, Free State had the highest proportion of marriages, 82,1% (4 890) solemnised by civil marriage officers. Western Cape recorded the highest proportion, 46,2% (6 031) of marriages solemnised by religious marriage officers. Wide differences of 'unspecified' way of solemnisation by province were noted. For example, 36,0% (1 673) of marriages in Mpumalanga had 'unspecified' method of solemnisation compared with 1,0% (60) in Free State.

¹ The crude civil marriage rate refers to the number of civil marriages per 100 000 persons in the population.

2.1.3 Marital status at the time of civil marriage

Table 3 on page 23 shows the number of civil marriages for bridegrooms and brides by marital status at the time of marriage and province of registration. The table indicates that the majority of marriages in 2020 for both bridegrooms and brides were first-time marriages in all provinces. For bridegrooms, there were 73 229 (82,0%) never married men, 3 466 (3,9%) divorcees and 525 (0,6%) widowers. For the brides, there were 77 733 (87,0%) never married women whilst 2 140 (2,4%) were divorcees and 356 (0,4%) were widows. The marital status of 12 118 (13,6%) bridegrooms and 9 109 (10,2%) brides were unspecified. A high proportion of marriages between bridegrooms and brides marrying for the first time was observed in Limpopo contributing 5 170 (85,8%) and 5 572 (92,4%) respectively. The profile of those that were remarrying showed that remarriages were more prevalent in divorcees compared to the widowed, 3 466 (3,9%) bridegroom divorcees compared to 525 (0,6%) widowers and 2 140 (2,4%) bride divorcees compared to 356 (0,4%) widows.

The number of marriages by marital status of husband and age differences between spouses are shown in Table 4 on page 24. It is observed that irrespective of their marital status, men generally married women who had never been married. Thus 69 080 (94,3%) of never married men wedded never married women, 726 (1,0%) married divorcees and 251 (0,3%) married widows. In addition, irrespective of the fact that more male divorcees and widowers wedded never married women, the proportion of male divorcees who married female divorcees, 589 (17,0%) was higher than the proportion that married widows, 22 (0,6%). Similarly, the proportion of widowers who married widows, 59 (11,2%) was higher than the proportion that married female divorcees, 11 (2,1%).

Table 4 also suggests that men tend to marry younger women, as 67 534 (75,6%) of the 89 338 bridegrooms were older than their brides. However, 14 722 (16,5%) bridegrooms were younger than their brides and 7 077 (7,9%) were of the same age as their brides. This observed age pattern is the same irrespective of the marital status of the bridegroom at the time of marriage (see Figures 2a to 2c on pages 10–11). However, the magnitude differs by the marital status of the spouses at the time of marriage. For example, 43,5% of never married men who married divorcees were younger than their brides (see Figure 2a) and 18,2% of male divorcees who married widowed women were also younger than their brides (see Figure 2c). A relatively smaller percentage (5,0%) was observed for male divorcees marrying never married women who were older than them (see Figure 2c).

2.1.4 Age at the time of civil marriage

Population scientists are interested in the age at first marriage or union because of its theoretical link to exposure to the possibility of pregnancy, childbearing and ultimately to fertility (Bongaarts, 1978). This link tends to be weakened in populations where pre-marital fertility is widespread. Nevertheless, age at first marriage or union continues to be a good proxy for measuring not only fertility but other health and socio-economic indicators relating particularly to the role and status of women in society. The importance of this indicator is, to some extent, underscored in South Africa through the marriage legislations that put restrictions on marriages involving children under 18 years. These children require the consent of a parent, a guardian or a commissioner of child welfare before entering into a marriage. In addition to the above consent, boys younger than 18 years and girls younger than 15 years of age require the consent of the Minister of Home Affairs before they can get married.

In 2020, there were no marriages for bridegrooms less than 18 years and 39 brides aged less than 18 years were registered, with 34 of these brides marrying for the first time (see Table 5 on page 25). Figure 3 on page 12 indicates that the highest number of never married men [17 411 (23,8%)] were aged 30–34 years whereas the highest number of never married women [20 392 (26,2%)] were aged 25–29 years. There were more never married women compared to never married men at younger ages (less than 35 years) and vice versa at older ages (35 years and older).

Figure 4a on page 13 shows the median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage. Median ages at marriage in 2020 was 37 years for bridegrooms and 33 years for brides. This includes those marrying for the first time, as well as those who were remarrying as a result of being divorced or widowed.

The median age of bridegrooms increased from 36 years in 2016 to 37 years in 2020 and that of brides increased from 32 years to 33 years during the same period. Figure 4a to Figure 4d on pages 13 and 14 further show that women generally entered marriage at younger ages than men. In addition, the median ages was lowest for those marrying for the first time (Figure 4b), followed by those widowed (Figure 4c) and highest for divorcees (Figure 4d).

For first time marriages, the median ages for never married men and women were 35 years and 32 years respectively in 2020, showing an age difference of three years (see Figure 4b). For remarriages, the median age for widowers and widows in 2020 (see Figure 4c) were 58 years and 39 years respectively, resulting in a 19-year age gap. The median age for widowers consistently increased from 54 years in 2016 to 58 years in 2020. The median age of widows ranged between 30 years and 39 years during 2016 and 2020.

The median age at marriage for divorcees are shown in Figure 4d. It is observed that the median age for male divorcees ranged between 55 years in 2016 to 57 years in 2020 whereas the median age of female divorcee ranged between 49 years in 2015 and 51 years in 2020. There was a six-year age difference in the median ages between male and female divorcees who married in 2020.

2.2 Customary marriages

2.2.1 Trends in the registration of customary marriages (2011–2020)

In 2020, 1 585 customary marriages were registered at the Department of Home Affairs, indicating a decrease of 43,2% from 2 789 customary marriages registered in 2019. It is observed from Table 6 on page 28 that the number of registered customary marriages fluctuated between 2011 and 2020. The highest number of registered customary marriages was recorded in 2011 (5 084) whilst the lowest number was recorded in 2020 (1 585). The observed crude customary marriage rate was 3 per 100 000 estimated resident population in 2020².

The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, 1998 (Act No. 120 of 1998) prescribes that customary marriages that were entered into after the commencement of this Act must be registered within a period of three months after the conclusion of the marriage and those entered before the Act to be registered within 12 months of the commencement of the Act. Figure 5 on page 15 shows that the majority of customary marriages were registered later than the year of marriage. In 2020, about 15,6% of marriages were registered the same year it took place.

2.2.2 Age at the time of customary marriage

The results presented in Table 7 on page 29 show that in 2020, about 708 (44,7%) of the registered customary marriages were from KwaZulu-Natal followed by Limpopo with 352 (22,2%), Eastern Cape 167 (10,5%) and Mpumalanga 162 (10,2%). The other five (5) provinces had less than 10% each. The age distribution of bridegrooms and brides at the time of customary marriage is presented in Table 8 on page 30. In 2020, there were 5 (0,3%) bridegrooms and 72 (4,5%) brides who were younger than 18 years. Table 8 further indicate that a higher number of bridegrooms 322 (20,3%) where aged 30–34 years and brides were predominant at ages 20–24 years, 316 (19,9%) and 25–29 years, 315 (19,9%).

The median ages at the time of customary marriage are presented in Figure 6 on page 15. Similar to civil marriages, bridegrooms were generally older than brides, with an age difference of about six years for

² The crude customary marriage rate refers to the number of customary marriages per 100 000 persons in the population

customary marriages registered between 2016 and 2020. The median ages of both bridegrooms and brides have been increasing over the period 2016 to 2020. The median age of bridegrooms ranged between 33 years and 36 years whereas that of bride ranged between 27 years and 30 years. A further comparison of the ages of bridegrooms and brides (see Figure 7 on page 16) shows that in 2020, 87,6% of bridegrooms were older than their brides whilst 7,5% were younger than their brides, and 4,6% were of the same age as their brides.

2.2.3 Marital status at the time of customary marriage

Since the Customary Marriages Act of 1998 recognises polygyny, a husband who has registered his marriage under the Act is permitted to register additional marriages under the Act provided he adheres to the regulations under the Act regarding his property. That is, at his own cost, the husband has to get an order from a competent court that will regulate his future matrimonial property system. It would be of interest to distinguish between first-time spouses and those who have married before (i.e. those in polygynous marriages, divorcees, widows and widowers). However, the information is not available at the DHA.

2.3 Civil unions

2.3.1 Trends in the registration of civil unions (2016–2020)

Table 9 on page 33 shows that in 2020, 1 471 civil unions were registered. In 2020, the crude civil union rate was 2 per 100 000 estimated resident population³. In general, the number of civil unions registered in South Africa increased between 2016 and 2019. Civil unions registered decreased by 16,9% from 1 771 in 2019 to 1 471 in 2020. The provincial distribution of civil unions registered in 2020 indicates that Gauteng 659 (44,8%) and Western Cape 434 (29,5%) were the provinces with the highest number of registrations of civil unions. In total, nearly three quarters (74,3%) of civil unions in 2020 were registered in these two provinces. The lowest number of registered civil unions was recorded in Limpopo 5 (0,3%) and Northern Cape 6 (0,4%).

2.3.2 Age at the time of civil union

The number of civil unions classified by the ages of spouse-1 and spouse-2 at the time of the solemnisation of civil union is presented in Table 10 on page 34. Spouses are distinguished as spouse-1 and spouse-2, based on the information completed by the spouses at the time of civil union registration. Table 10 on page 34 shows that the highest number of spouses-1 were aged 30–34 with [371 (25,2%)] and aged 25–29 for spouses-2 with [372 (25,3%)].

As observed in Figure 8 on page 16, the median ages of spouses-1 were higher than those of spouses-2. The median ages of spouses-1 was fluctuating between 35 years and 36 years over the five year period, 2016 to 2020 while the median ages of spouses-2 was fluctuating between 33 years and 34 years on the same period. Over the five-year period, the yearly differences in the median ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 ranged between two and three years. Information in Figure 9 on page 17 further shows that in 2020, 60,5% of spouses-1 were older than their spouses, whilst 29,0% were younger than their spouses and 10,5% were of the same age as their spouses.

2.3.3 Marital status at the time of civil union

It would be of interest to distinguish between first time spouses and those who had married before (i.e. divorcees, widows and widowers) and the type of marriage relationship in which they were in. However, this information is not available at the DHA.

³ The crude civil union rate refers to the number of civil unions per 100 000 persons in the population

3. Divorces

3.1 Trends in divorces (2011 – 2020)

The 2020 divorce data reported in this statistical release is based on 16 097 completed divorce forms that Stats SA received and processed. The number (16 097) indicates a decrease of 7 613 (32,1%) divorces from the 23 710 cases processed in 2019 (see Table 11 on page 37). The table shows that the total number of divorces increased from 2011 to 2017 and decreased from 2018 to 2020. In 2020, about 127 divorces were granted for same-sex couples. The observed crude divorce rate was 27 divorces per 100 000 estimated resident population in 2020⁴.

Table 11 also provides data on divorces classified by population group and the year in which the divorce was granted. In 2020, black African couples had the highest number of divorces compared to other population groups, this pattern has been the same for the ten-year period (2011 to 2020). About 7 566 (47,0%) of the 16 097 divorces granted in 2020 were from black African population group followed by white 3 855 (23,9%), coloured 2 459 (15,3%), India/Asian 983 (6,1%) and divorces from different population groups (mixed) 484 (3,0%). The population group of 750 couples was not specified.

Figure 14 on page 20 demonstrates the number of divorces and crude divorce rate by population group. The crude divorce rates by population groups show that the white population group had the highest rate of 82 per 100 000 estimated resident population followed by the Indian/Asian and coloured population groups with 64 and 47 per 100 000 respectively. The black African population had 16 per 100 000 estimated resident population.

Table 12 on page 38 indicates information on the occupation of husbands and wives at the time of divorce. It is noted that a high proportion of husbands (24,7%) and wives (28,1%) did not specify the type of occupation they were engaged in at the time of divorce. In addition, 17,4% and 24,7% of husbands and wives respectively were not economically active at the time of divorce. Both male and female divorcees were largely employed in professional, semi-professional and technical occupations with 2 327 (14,5%) and 2 566 (15,9%) respectively.

3.2 Characteristics of plaintiffs

The 2020 data presented in Table 13 on page 39 show that more wives than husbands, 8 490 (52,7%) women compared to 5 505 (34,2%) men initiated divorce proceedings and 934 (5,8%) divorces were initiated by both husband and wife. The sex of the plaintiff was not specified in 1 168 (7,3%) cases. With the exception of women from the black African population group who had a lower proportion of plaintiffs (48,0%), the proportion of women plaintiffs from the other population groups was above 50,0%. The plaintiffs for the interracial couples show that 55,2% of the divorces were filed by wives. The proportion of women plaintiffs for the white population group, Indian/Asian population group and coloured population group were 59,1%, 57,7% and 56,9% respectively. Among black African divorcees, divorce initiated by both partners constituted about 8,3%.

Table 14 on page 39 provides information on the province and sex of the plaintiff. The provincial distribution indicates that Gauteng (4 044), KwaZulu-Natal (3 239), Western Cape (3 029) and Eastern Cape (2 234) were the provinces with the highest number of divorces granted. Together the four provinces contributed over three quarter (77,9%) of the divorces granted in 2020. However, this could also be due to the fact that these provinces have the largest populations.

⁴ The crude divorce rate refers to the number of divorces per 100 000 persons in the population

3.3 Number of divorces by way of solemnisation of marriage

Information presented in Table 15 on page 40 shows that 7 475 (46,4%) of the 2020 divorce cases were from marriages that were solemnised by religious rites and 7 095 (44,1%) by civil rites. About 69,3% of divorces from the white population group and 66,1% of divorces from the coloured population group were from marriages that were solemnised by religious rites. Most divorces from the black African and Indian/Asian population groups were from marriages that were solemnised by civil rites, 63,7% and 52,8% respectively.

3.4 Number of times married

Results presented in Table 16 on page 40 show that the 2020 divorce cases for both men and women were mainly from individuals who had married once. More than 80,0% of divorces for men and women were from first-time marriages compared to 11,7% of men and 9,8% of women from second-time marriages. Less than 2% of men and women were getting divorced for at least three times.

3.5 Age at the time of divorce

The median age at the time of divorce in 2020 were 45 years for males and 41 years for females, indicating that generally, divorced males were older than divorced females, with a difference of about four years (see Figure 10 on page 17). The pattern of median ages in 2020 by population group showed that black African males and white males had the highest median age of 45 years, while the coloured and Indian/Asian population groups recorded the median ages of 43 years. The difference in the median ages at the time of divorce between males and females was greater in the black African population group (four years) compared to the coloured, Indian/Asian and white population groups, with median age differences of three years between males and females.

Detailed information on the age and population group of divorcees is presented in Figure 11 on page 18 for males and in Figure 12 on page 18 for females, as well as in Tables 17 and 18 on pages 41 and 42 respectively. Although there were differences in the ages at which most men and women from the various population groups divorced, the age patterns were quite similar. There were fewer divorces among the younger (less than 25 years old) and the older (65 years and older) divorcees, however divorces start peaking later, mostly at 35-39 years for black African males than for other population groups where they start peaking mostly from 30-34 years. For males, the peak age group for black African and coloured groups was 40 to 44 years whereas the peak for Indian/Asian population and white population group was 45 to 49 years (see Figure 11). In the case of females, the peak age group at divorce was 35 to 39 years for black African, coloured, Indian/Asian and white population groups (see Figure 12).

3.6 Duration of marriage of divorcing couples and population group

Statistics from the annual divorce data do not give a comprehensive picture of the number of marriages ending in divorce. However, there is data on the duration of marriages for divorces granted in 2020. Table 19 and Table 20 show that the largest number [4 104 (25,5%)] of divorces were for marriages that lasted between five and nine years. This group is followed by marriages that lasted between 10 and 14 years [3 416 (21,2%)] and marriages that lasted for less than five years [2 815 (17,5%)]. Results showed that four in ten divorces 6 919 (43,0%) of the 16 097 in 2020 were marriages that lasted for less than 10 years.

Population group variations showed that 27,1% of divorces from the black African; 24,8% from coloured, 24,0% from white and 19,5% from Indian/Asian population groups were from marriages that lasted between five and nine years as indicated on Figure 13 on page 19. The white population had the highest proportion (20,9%) of divorces that occurred in the first four years. The proportion of divorces in all population groups declined as the duration of marriage increased, with a significant decline being observed after fourteen years of marriage. The

proportion of divorces from the Indian/Asian population group is higher than the other population groups for marriages that did not last for 15 years and more.

3.7 Divorces involving couples with children less than 18 years

In 2020, 8 826 (54,8%) of the 16 097 divorces had children younger than 18 years whereas 7 271 (45,2%) divorces had no children (see Table 21 on page 45). The profile of white divorcees showed that more than half of the recorded divorces were without children (55,5%). Looking at the black African and coloured divorcees, divorces involving couples with children constituted about 59,8% and 61,8% respectively. Table 22 on page 45 shows that 52,7% of children affected by divorce were from the black African population group; 18,4% from the white population group; 17,6% from the coloured population group and 5,1% from the Indian/Asian population group.

4. Summary and concluding remarks

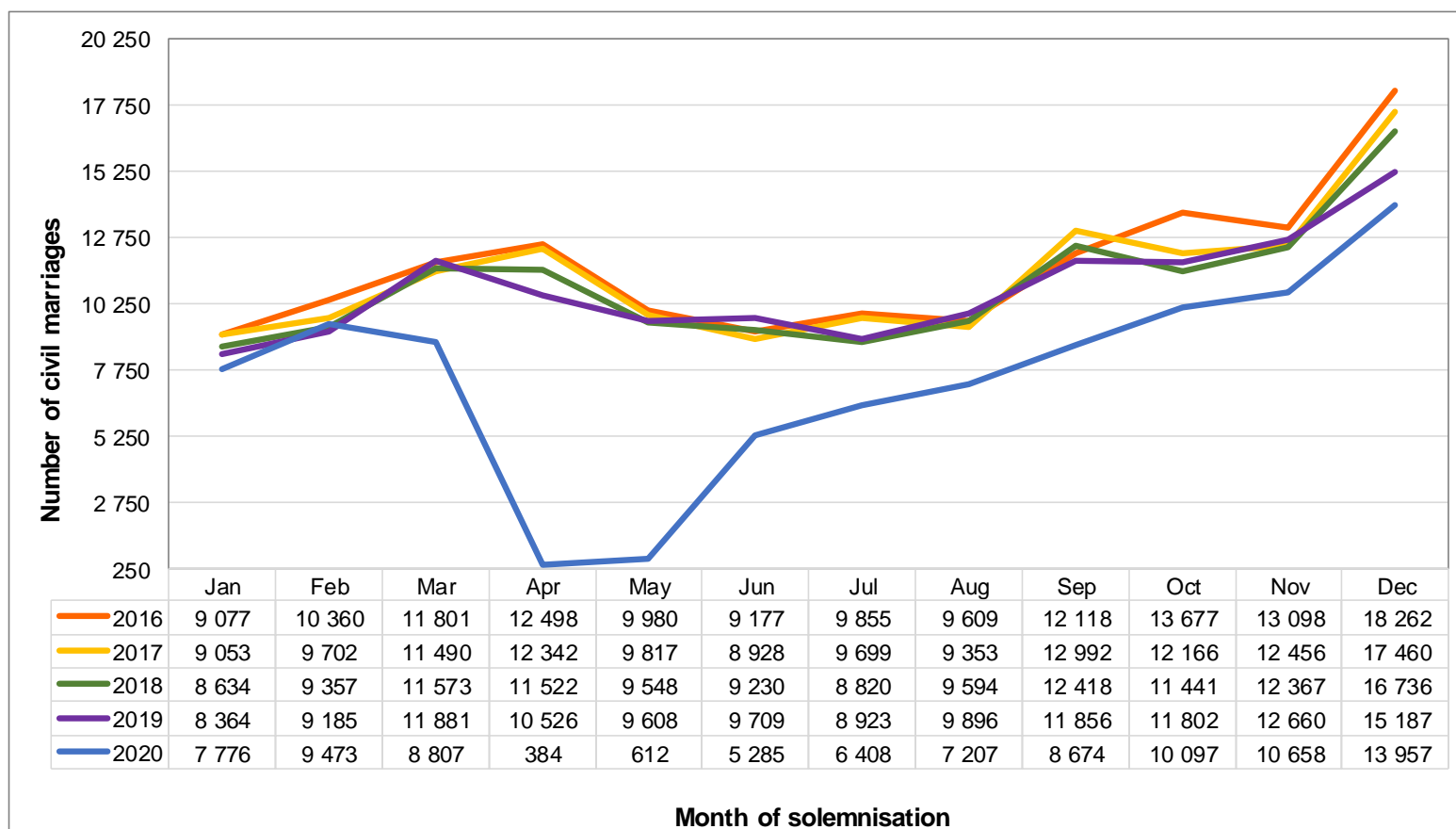
This statistical release provides information on civil and customary marriages, civil unions and divorces for 2020, based on data from the South African national marriage registration systems of the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and data of divorces granted by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development.

In total, 89 338 civil marriages were registered in South Africa in 2020, with more than half 52 265 (58,5%) being solemnised by DHA marriage officers. The highest number of civil marriages was registered in Gauteng (22 019), followed by KwaZulu-Natal (14 948) and Western Cape (13 046), and the lowest was registered in Northern Cape (2 798). The majority of civil marriages in 2020 for both bridegrooms (73 229) and brides (77 733) were first time marriages, with women generally entering into marriage at younger ages than men do.

The number of registered customary marriages was 1 585 in 2020, which decreased by 43,2% from a total of 2 789 recorded in 2019. The majority of bridegrooms [1 388 (87,6%)] were older than their brides, with the gap in median ages at registration of customary marriage much wider than for other types of marriages. The number of registered civil unions in South Africa in 2020 was 1 471, most of which were registered in Gauteng (659) and Western Cape (434), and lowest in Northern Cape (6) and Limpopo (5).

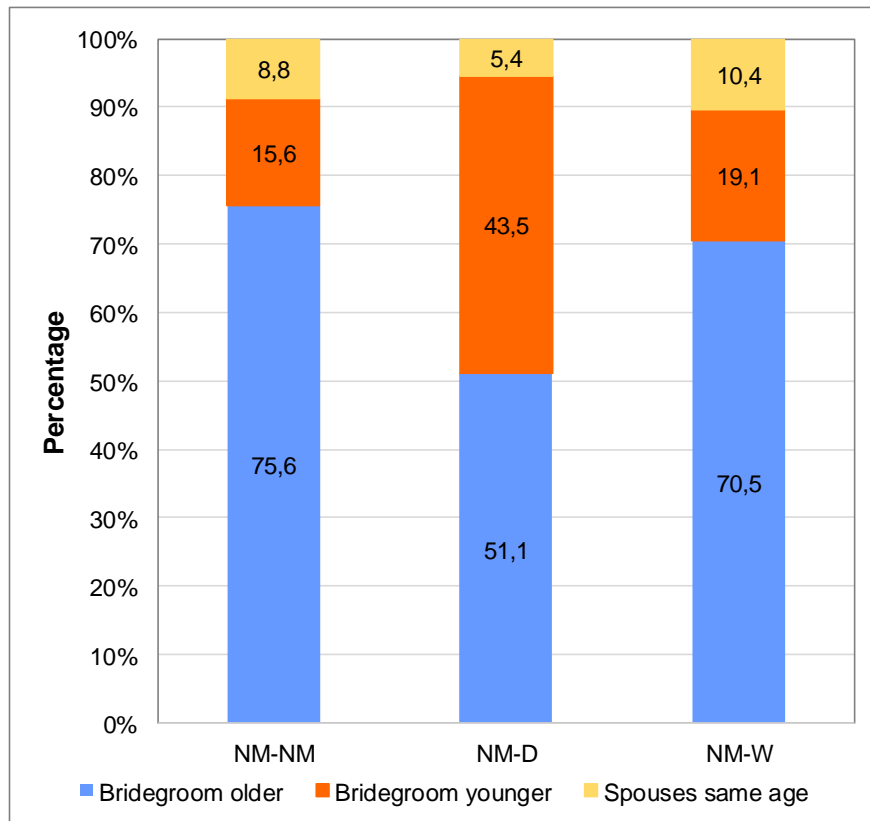
With regard to divorces, the data showed that 16 097 divorces were granted in 2020. Generally, there was an increase in the proportion of divorces for black Africans and a decline for the white population group. Divorces were mainly from people who had married for the first time. There were more wives than husbands who filed the divorce, with husbands generally getting divorced at a later age than wives. The provincial distribution shows that Gauteng (4 044), KwaZulu-Natal (3 239), Western Cape (3 029) and Eastern Cape (2 234) were the provinces with the highest number of divorces granted. In 2020, about 14 627 children aged less than 18 years were affected by divorces that took place.

Overall, the information provided in this release showed a decreasing trend in the number of registered civil marriages, fluctuations on customary marriages and an increasing trend on civil unions except in 2020. The number of divorces granted showed an increase from 2011 to 2017 then decreased till 2020. Areas of improvement in the quality of data were noted, particularly relating to completeness of information pertaining to unspecified province of registration, way of solemnisation and marital status at time of marriage for the data on marriages and civil unions; and unspecified population group and occupation of the divorcees.

Figure 1 – Number of civil marriages by month of solemnisation, 2016 – 2020

NB. April and May 2020 was a period of hard lockdown.

Figure 2a – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (never married men), 2020



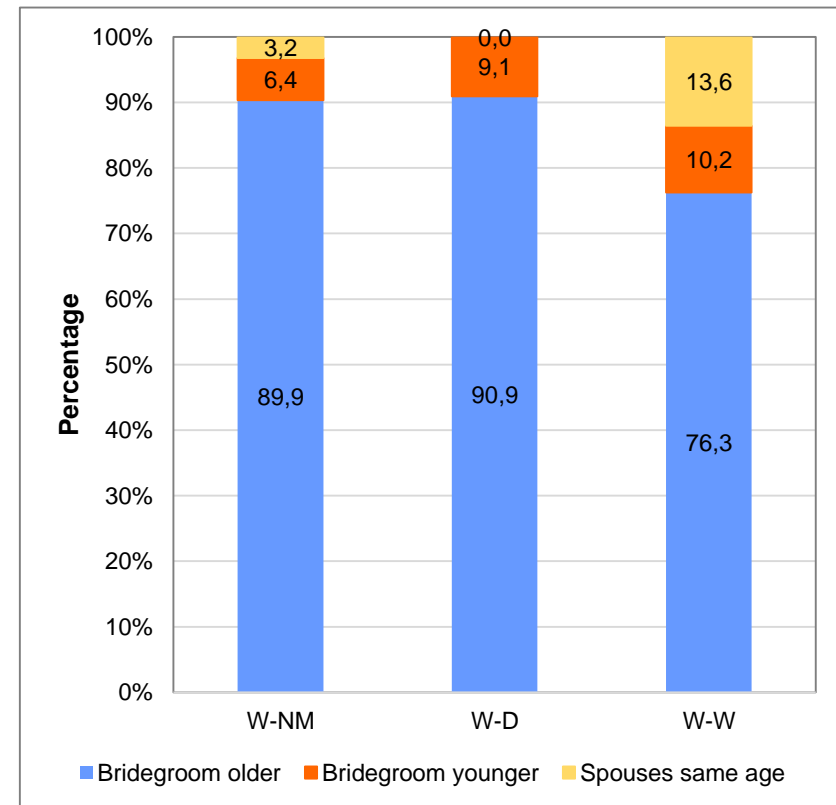
*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding up

NM – NM = Never married men to Never married women

NM – D = Never married men to Divorcee

NM – W = Never married men to Widow

Figure 2b – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (widowers), 2020

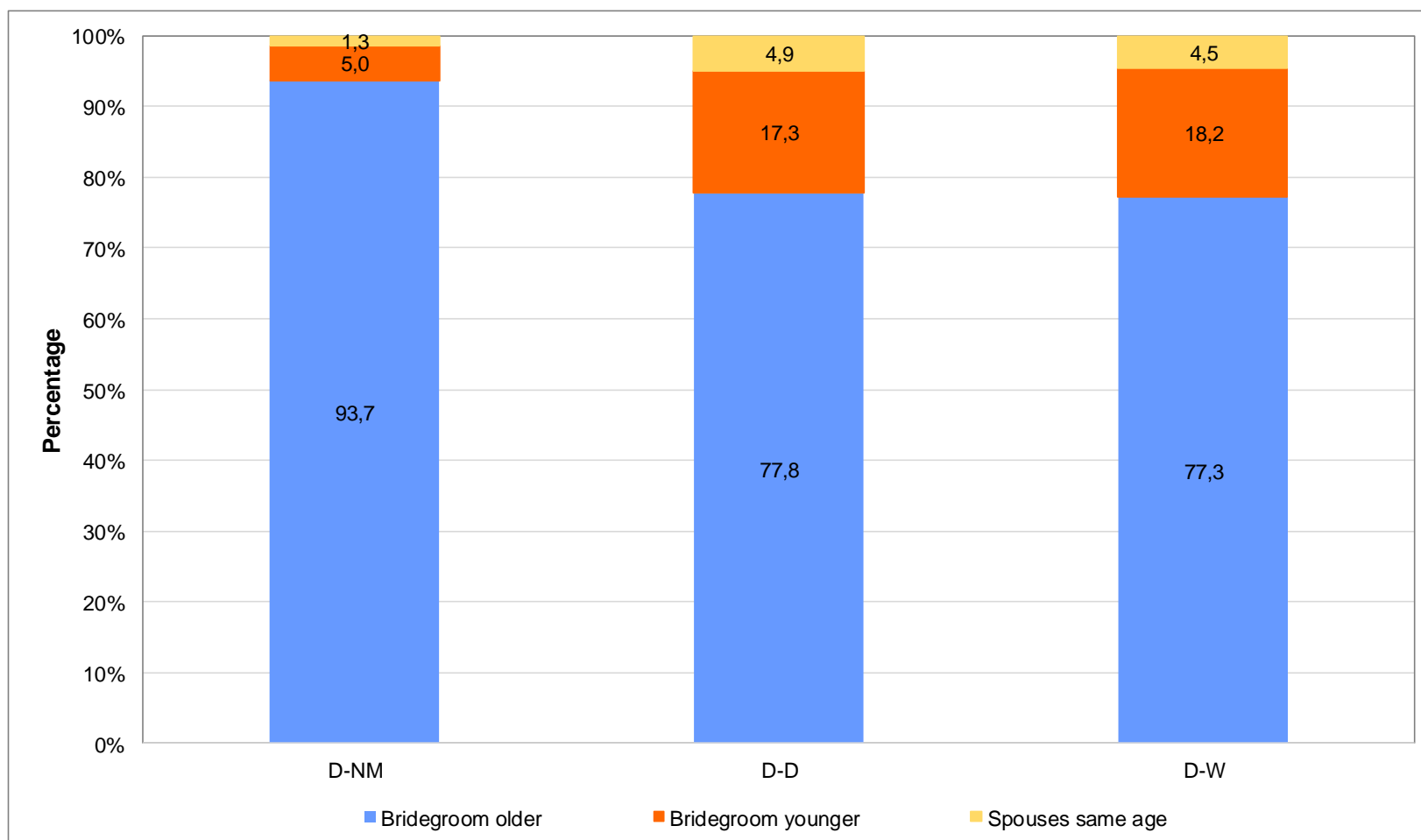


*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding up

W – NM = Widower to Never married women

W – D = Widower to Divorcee

W – W = Widower to Widow

Figure 2c – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (male divorcees), 2020

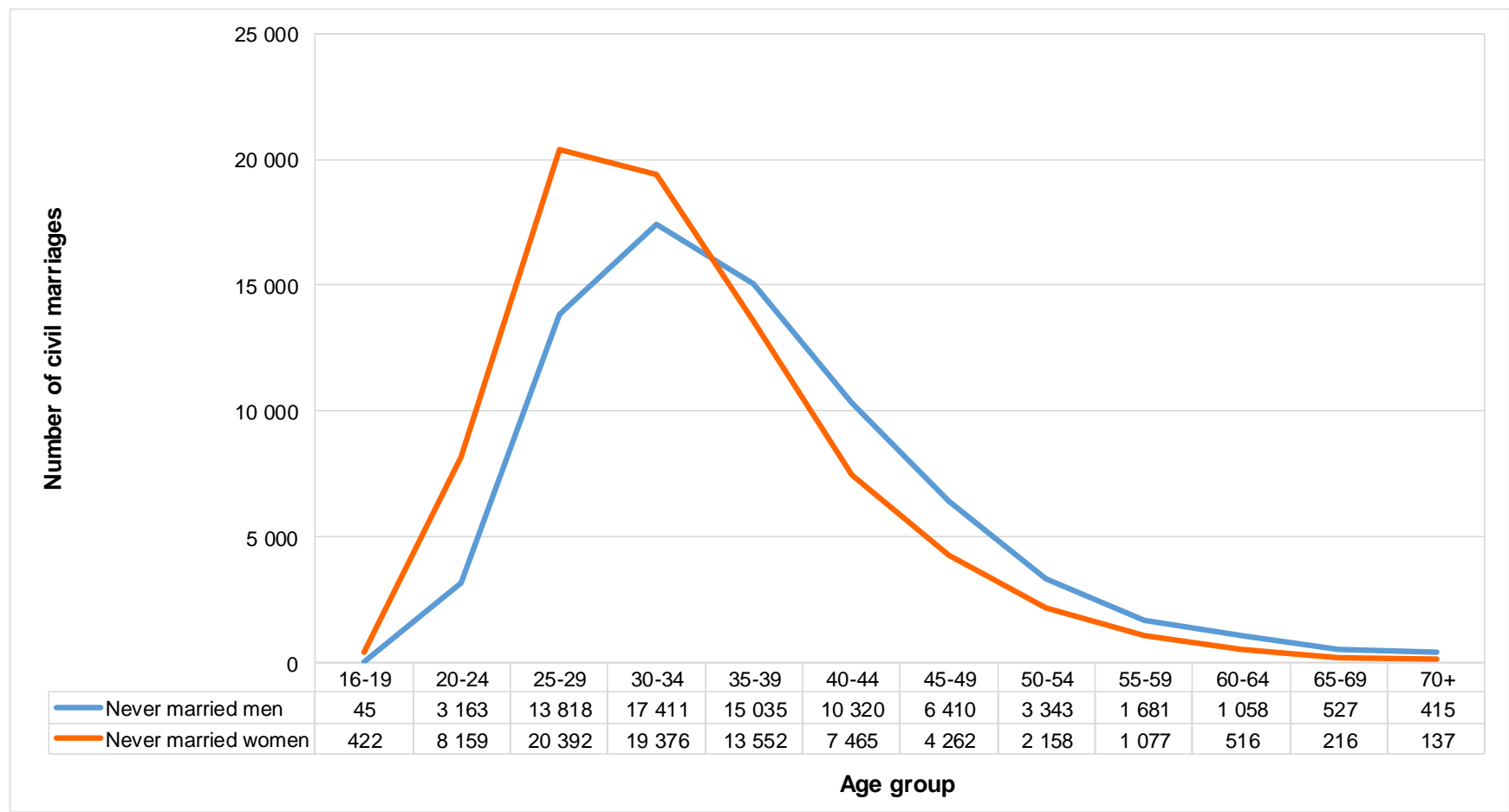
*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding up.

D – NM = Divorcee to Never married women

D – D = Divorcee to Divorcee

D – W = Divorcee to Widow

Figure 3 – Number of civil marriages for never married men and women by age group, 2020



*Excluding three cases and one case of unspecified age of never married men women respectively.

Figure 4a – Median age of bridegrooms and brides at the time of civil marriage, 2016 – 2020

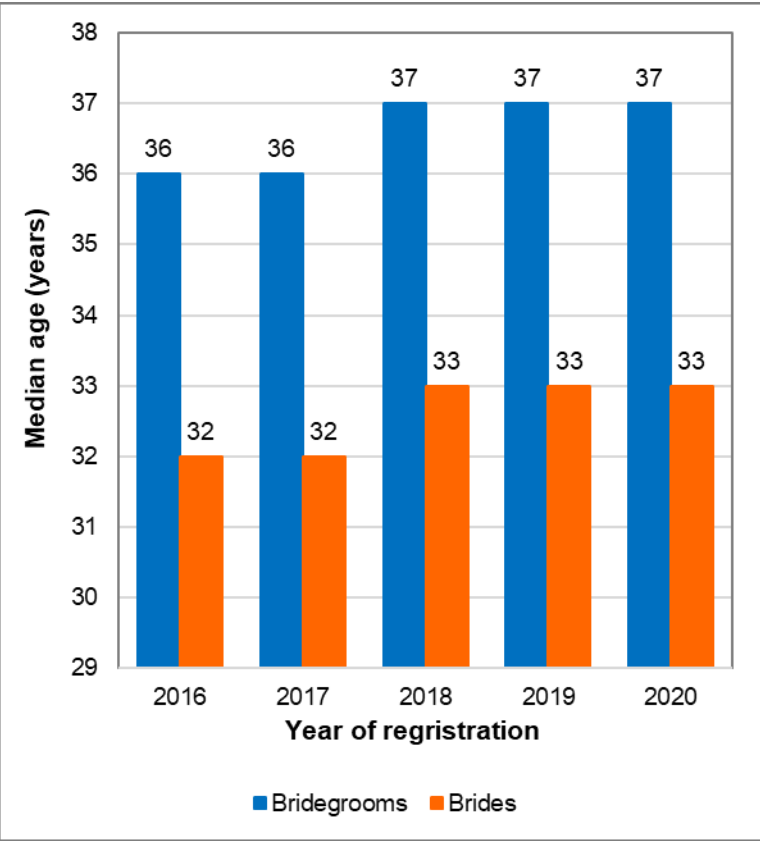


Figure 4b – Median age of never married men and women at the time of civil marriage, 2016 – 2020

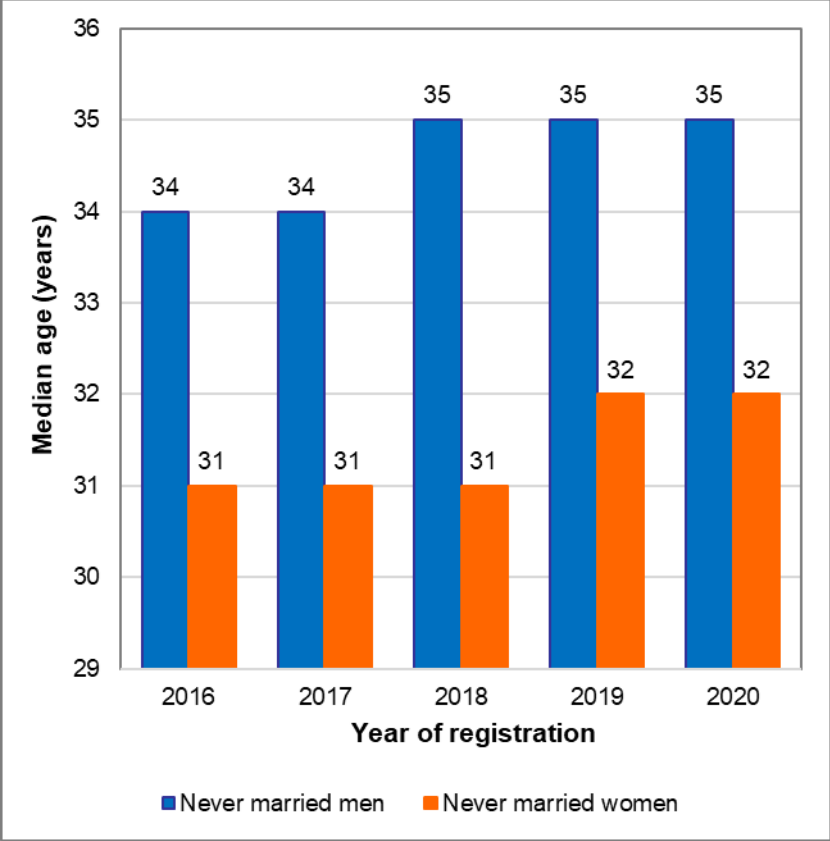


Figure 4c – Median age of widowers and widows at the time of civil marriage, 2016 – 2020

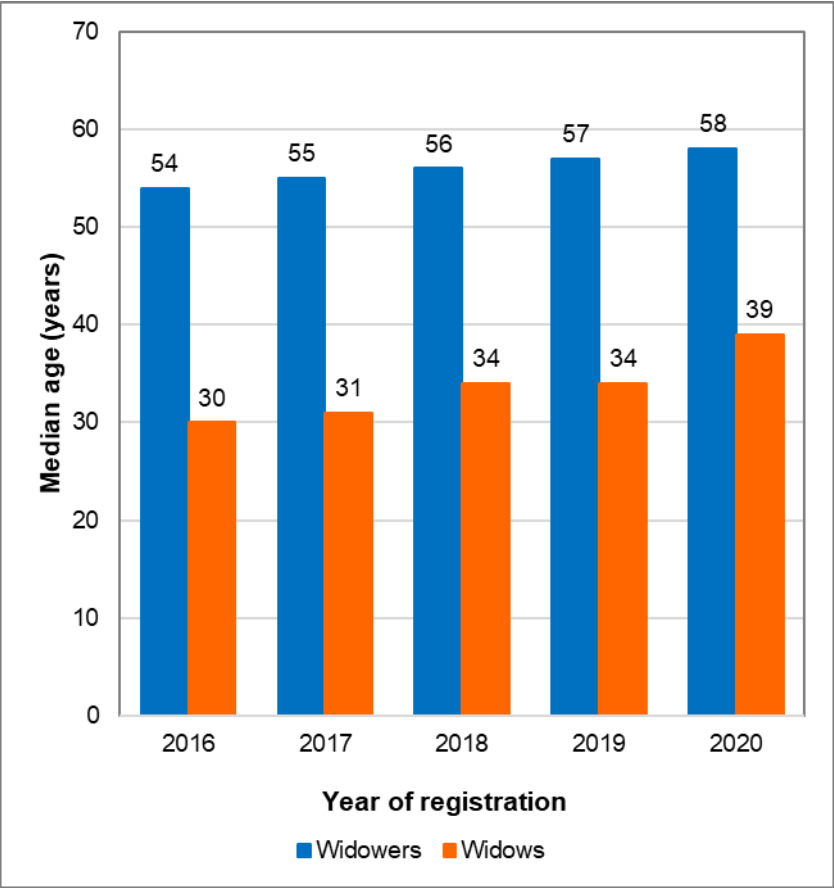


Figure 4d – Median age of male and female divorcees at the time of civil marriage, 2016 – 2020

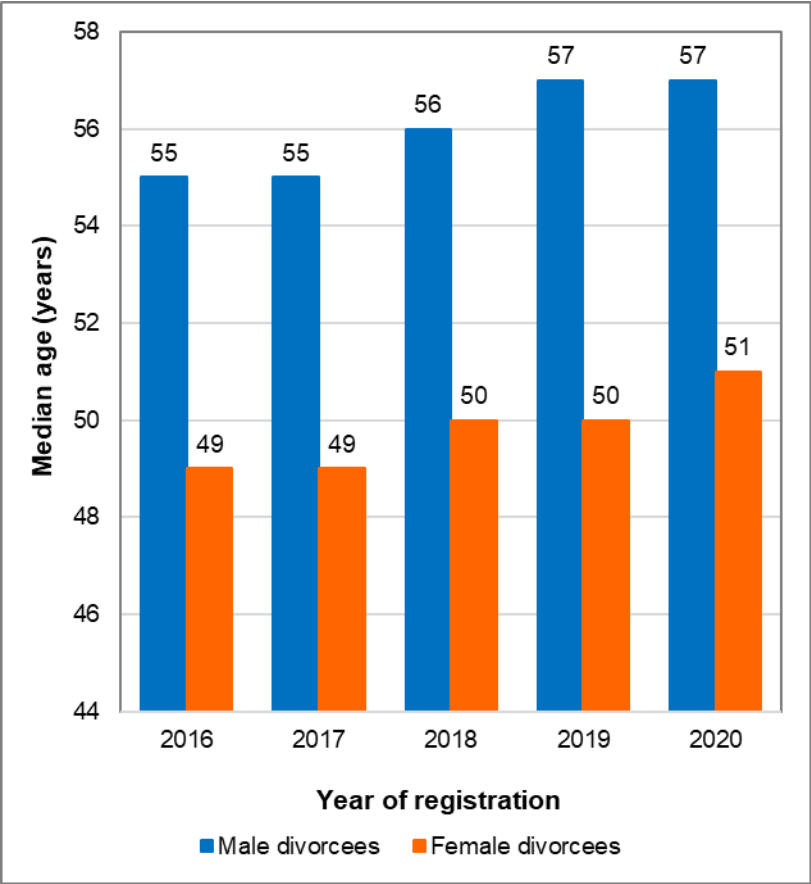
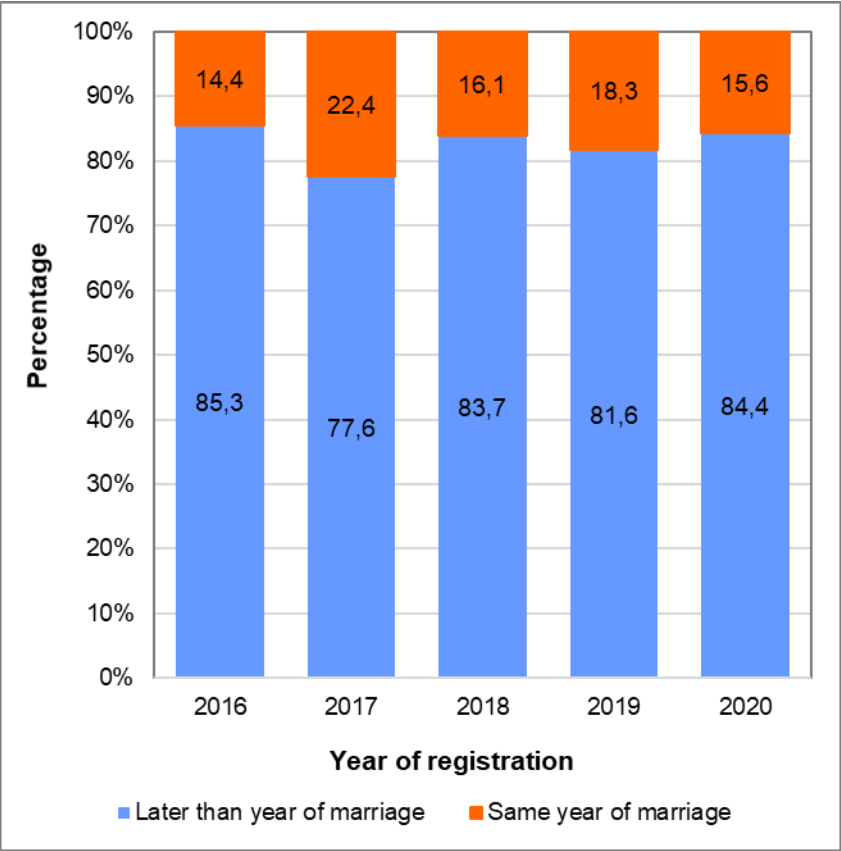


Figure 5 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by year of marriage and time it took to register the marriage, 2016 – 2020



*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding off.

Figure 6 – Median age of bridegrooms and brides at the time of customary marriage, 2016 – 2020

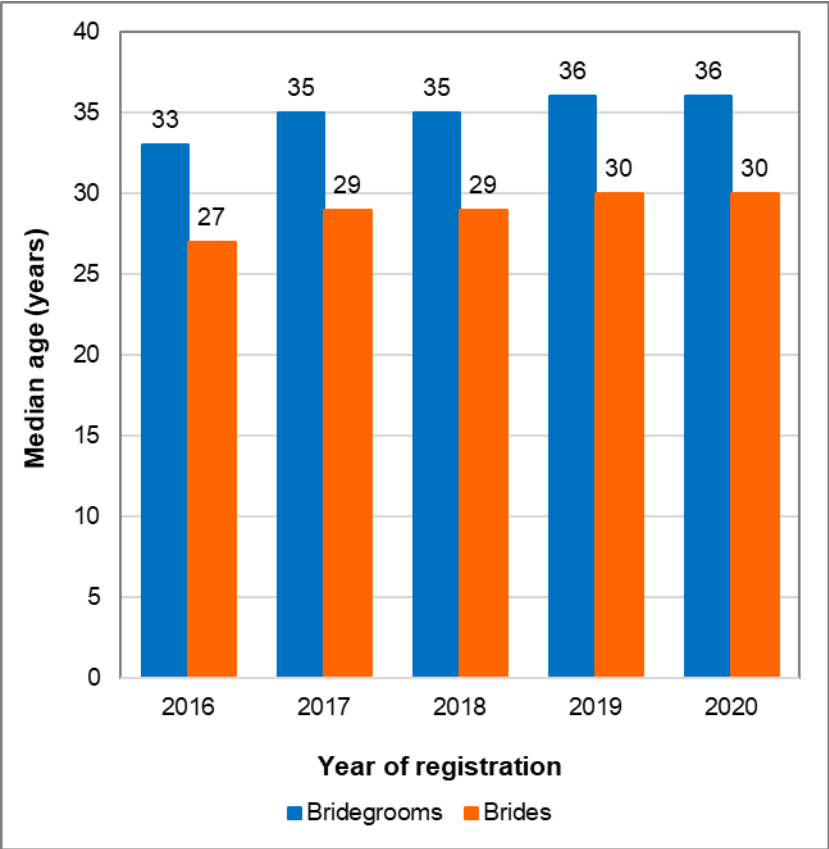
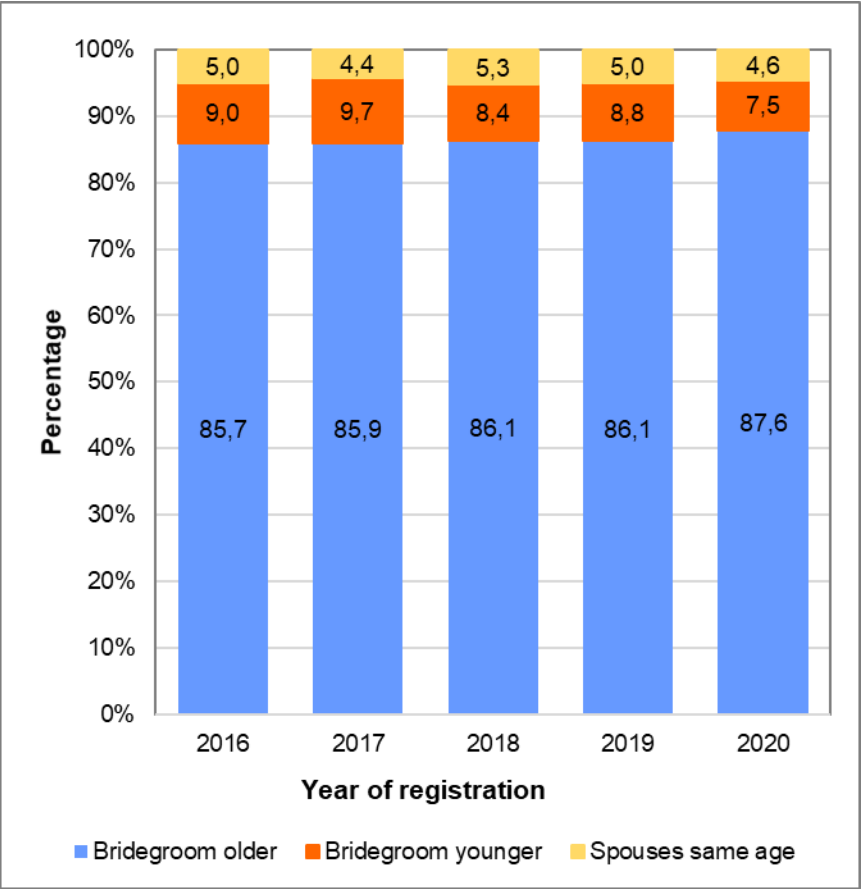


Figure 7 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage, 2016 – 2020



Excluding 0,2%; 0,1% and 0,3% of unspecified age difference in 2018; 2019 and 2020 respectively

Figure 8 – Median age of spouses in civil unions, 2016 – 2020

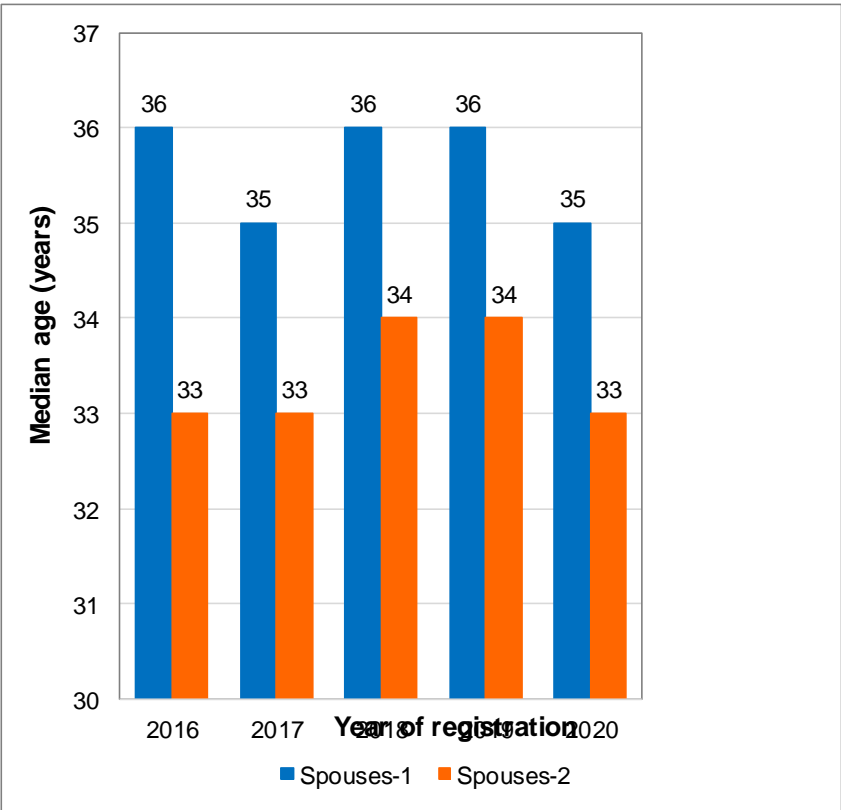
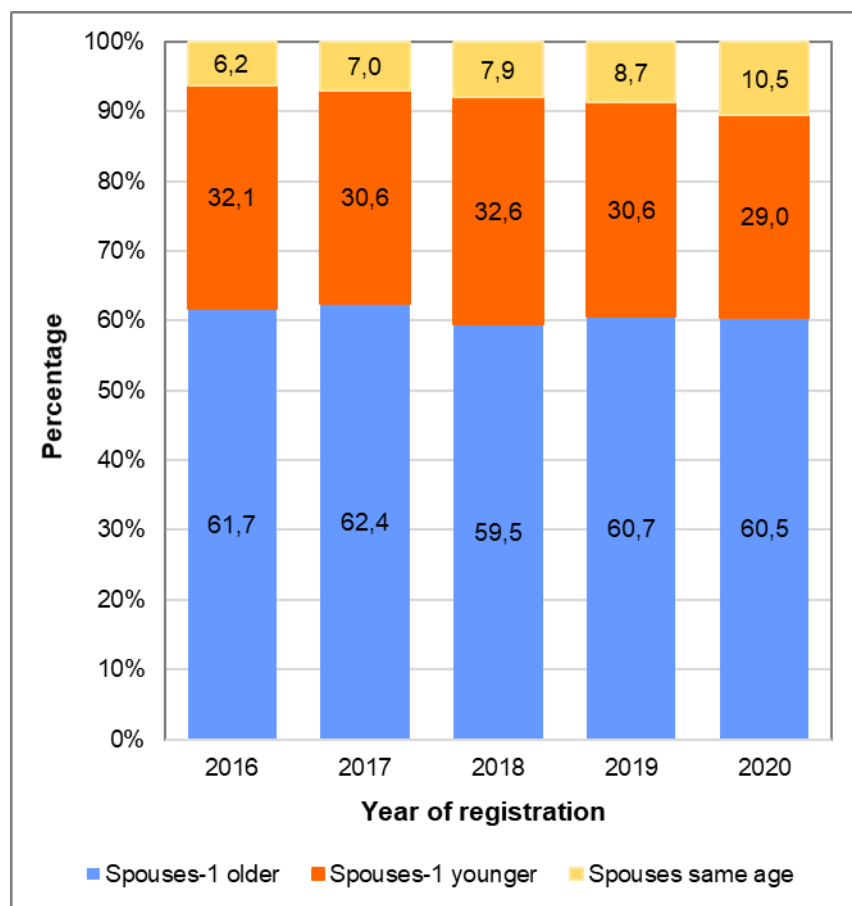


Figure 9 – Percentage distribution of civil unions by age differences between spouses at the time of union, 2016 – 2020



*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding off.

Figure 10 – Median age of divorcees by sex and population group, 2020

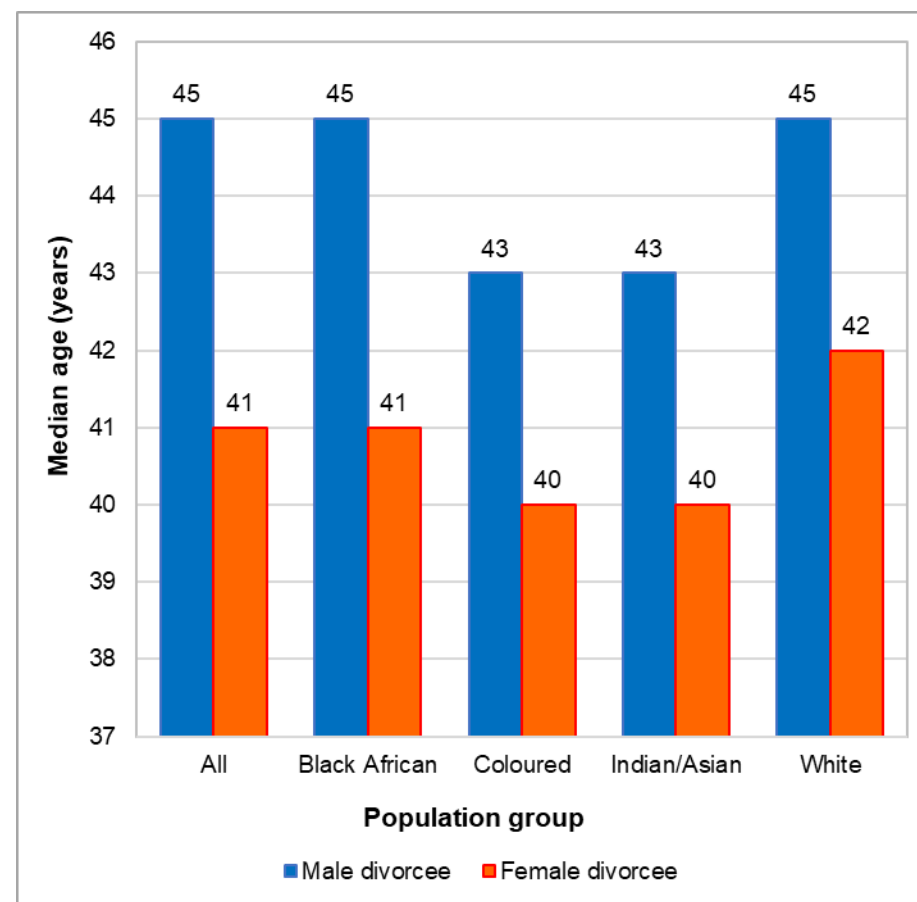


Figure 11 – The proportions of divorces by age and population group (males), 2020

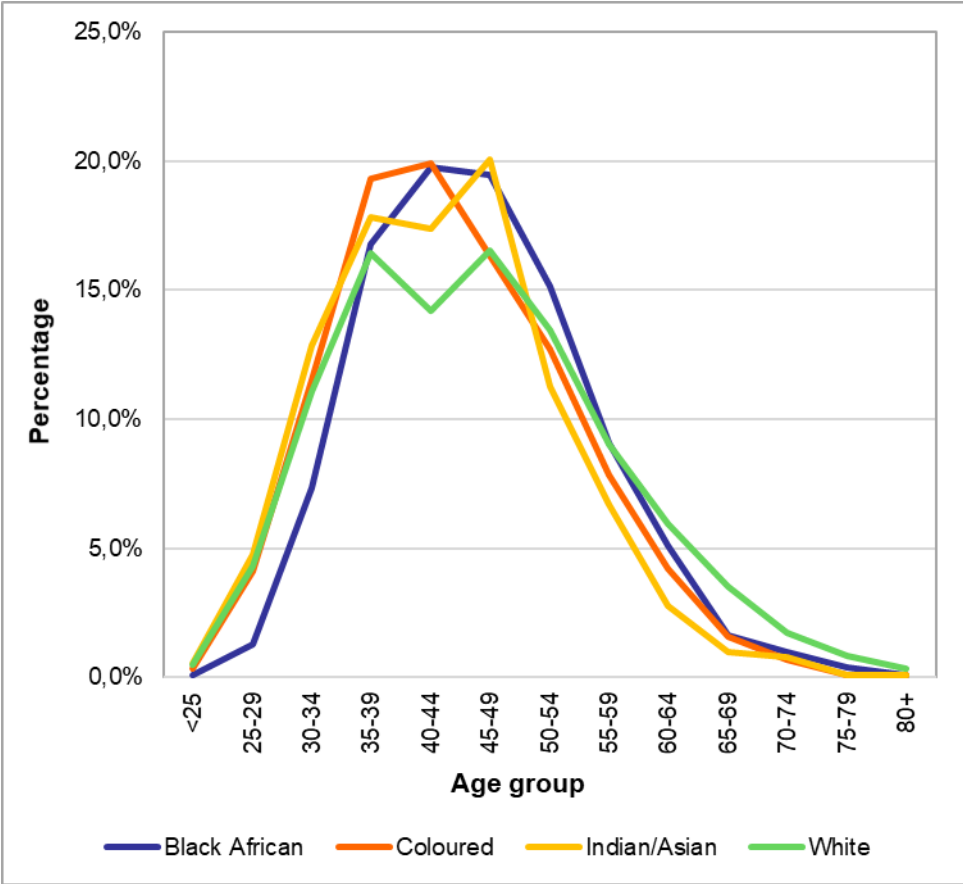


Figure 12 – The proportions of divorces by age group and population group (females), 2020

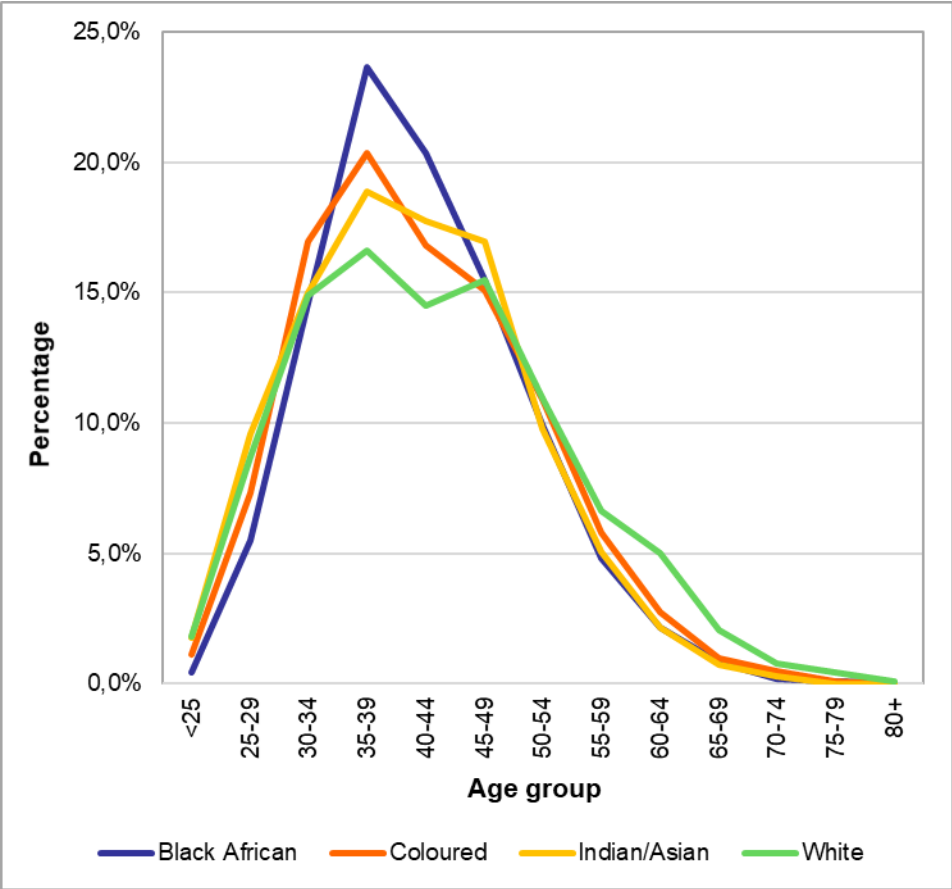


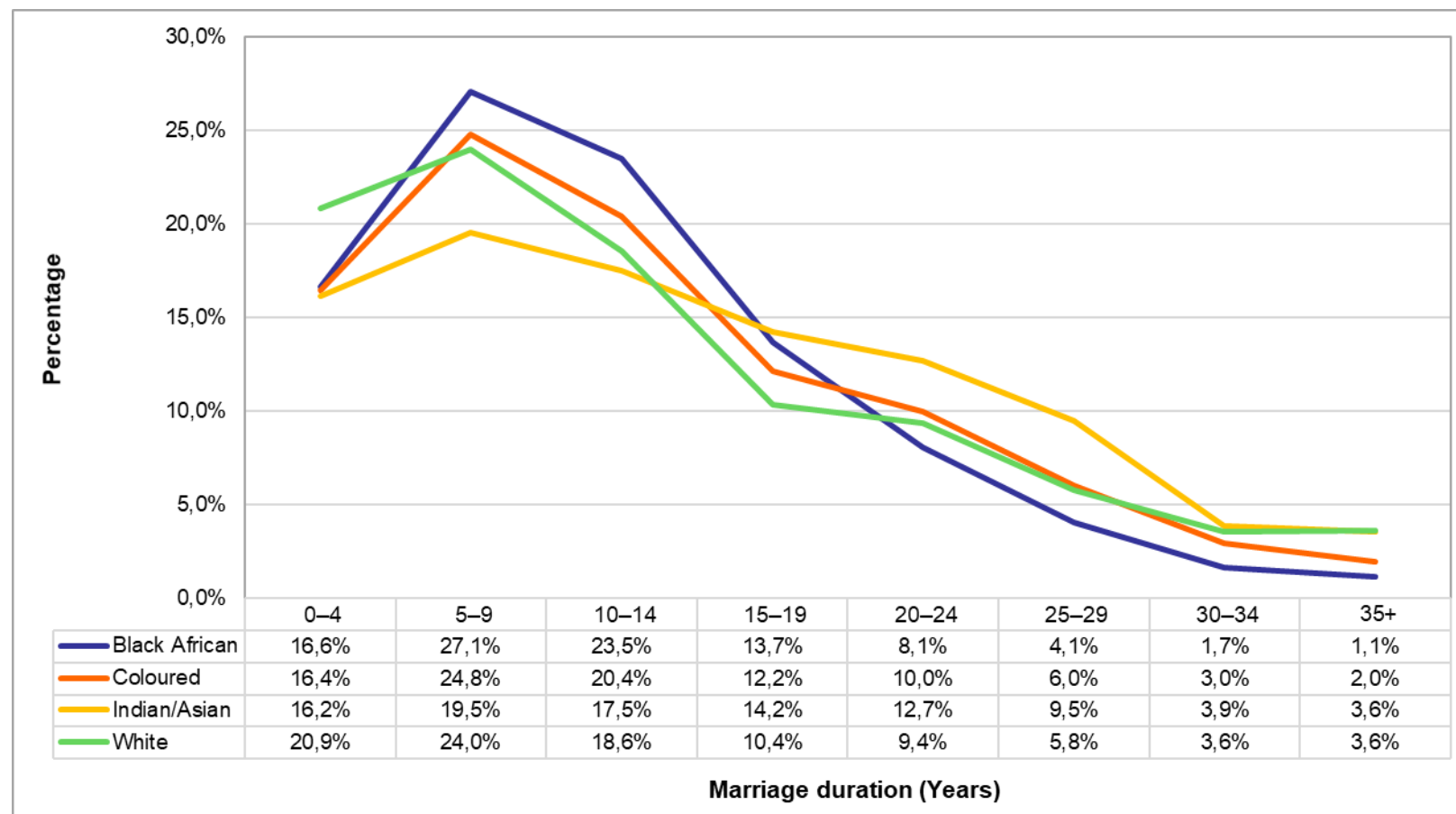
Figure 13 – The proportions of divorces by duration of marriage and population group, 2020

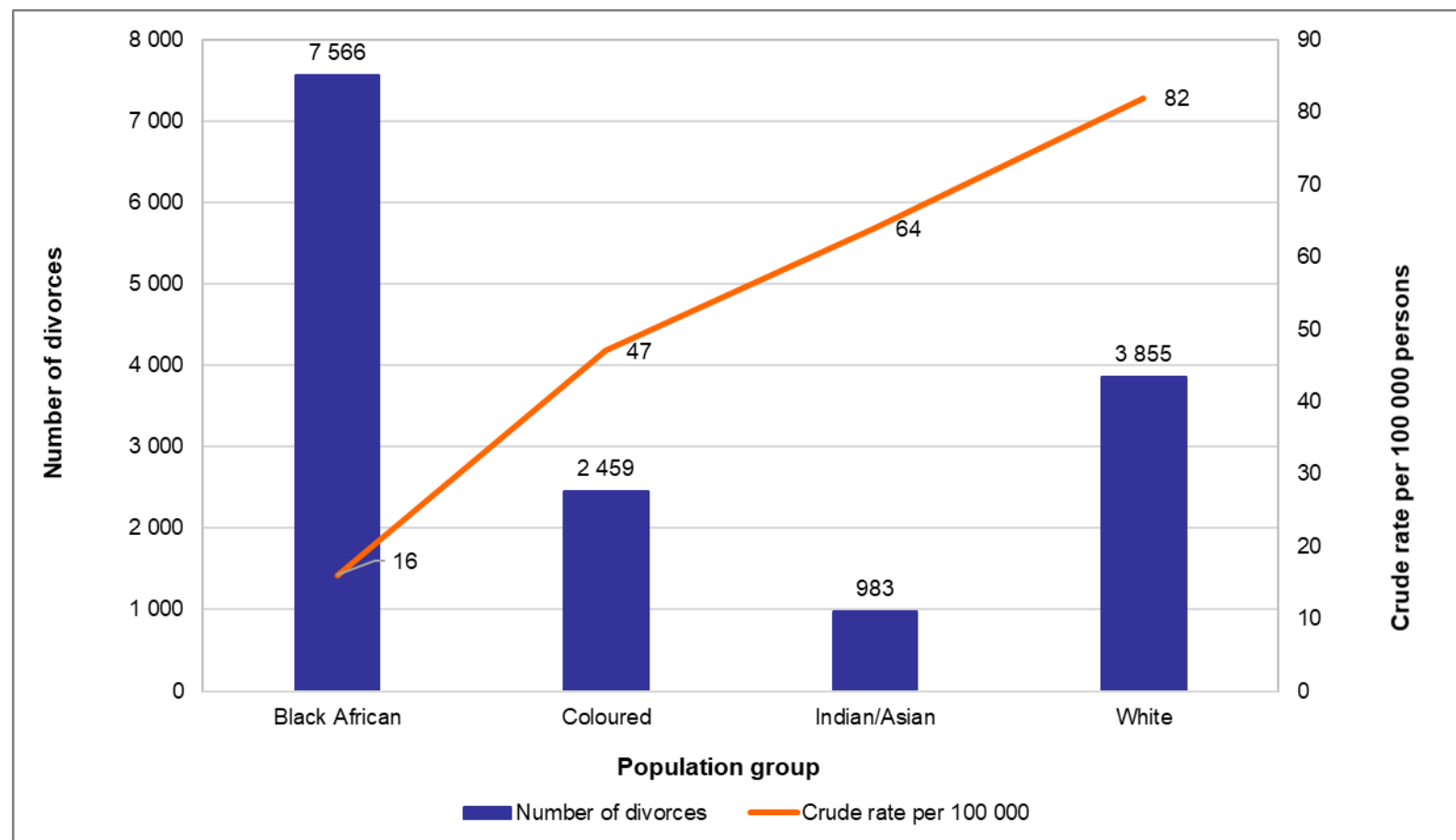
Figure 14 – Number of divorces and crude divorce rate by population group, 2020

Table 1 – Number of registered civil marriages in South Africa, 2011 – 2020

Year of registration	Number of civil marriages
2011	167 264
2012	161 112
2013	158 642
2014	150 852
2015	138 627
2016	139 512
2017	135 458
2018	131 240
2019	129 597
2020	89 338

Table 2 – Number and percentage distribution of civil marriages by province of marriage registration and way of solemnisation, 2020

Province of registration	Grand Total	Way of solemnisation			%			
		DHA	Religious	Unspecified	Total	DHA	Religious	Unspecified
Grand Total	89 338	52 265	26 535	10 538	100,0	58,5	29,7	11,8
Western Cape	13 046	6 710	6 031	305	100,0	51,4	46,2	2,3
Eastern Cape	8 649	5 289	2 266	1 094	100,0	61,2	26,2	12,6
Northern Cape	2 798	1 682	723	393	100,0	60,1	25,8	14,0
Free State	5 955	4 890	1 005	60	100,0	82,1	16,9	1,0
KwaZulu-Natal	14 948	8 645	4 522	1 781	100,0	57,8	30,3	11,9
North West	6 083	3 829	2 054	200	100,0	62,9	33,8	3,3
Gauteng	22 019	13 123	4 959	3 937	100,0	59,6	22,5	17,9
Mpumalanga	4 646	1 854	1 119	1 673	100,0	39,9	24,1	36,0
Limpopo	6 029	4 336	633	1 060	100,0	71,9	10,5	17,6
Outside RSA	325	324	1	-	100,0	99,7	0,3	0,0
Unknown	5	5	-	-	100,0	100,0	0,0	0,0
Unspecified	4 835	1 578	3 222	35	100,0	32,6	66,6	0,7

Table 3 – Number of civil marriages by province of registration and marital status of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2020

Province of registration	Bridegroom					Bride				
	Total	Never married men	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never married women	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	89 338	73 229	3 466	525	12 118	89 338	77 733	2 140	356	9 109
Western Cape	13 046	10 409	491	9	2 137	13 046	10 971	413	6	1 656
Eastern Cape	8 649	6 986	405	36	1 222	8 649	7 522	219	23	885
Northern Cape	2 798	2 327	141	5	325	2 798	2 495	71	2	230
Free State	5 955	4 884	246	40	785	5 955	5 168	184	40	563
KwaZulu-Natal	14 948	12 507	608	136	1 697	14 948	13 362	256	76	1 254
North West	6 083	5 165	224	18	676	6 083	5 432	139	16	496
Gauteng	22 019	17 617	783	126	3 493	22 019	18 642	546	94	2 737
Mpumalanga	4 646	3 902	177	42	525	4 646	4 119	97	35	395
Limpopo	6 029	5 170	229	78	552	6 029	5 572	92	40	325
Outside RSA	325	290	5	-	30	325	305	2	-	18
Unknown	5	4	-	-	1	5	2	1	-	2
Unspecified	4 835	3 968	157	35	675	4 835	4 143	120	24	548

Table 4 – Number of civil marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage and marital status of husband, 2020

Age differences	Grand Total	Never Married					Divorcee				
		Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	89 338	73 229	69 080	726	251	3 172	3 466	2 028	589	22	827
Bridegroom older	67 534	54 264	52 253	371	177	1 463	3 041	1 900	458	17	666
Bridegroom younger	14 722	12 594	10 770	316	48	1 460	331	101	102	4	124
Same age	7 077	6 368	6 054	39	26	249	94	27	29	1	37
Unspecified	5	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Age differences	Widower					Unspecified				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	525	437	11	59	18	12 118	6 188	814	24	5 092
Bridegroom older	464	393	10	45	16	9 765	5 475	545	16	3 729
Bridegroom younger	37	28	1	6	2	1 760	505	219	8	1 028
Same age	22	14	-	8	-	593	208	50	-	335
Unspecified	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides; and marital status at the time of marriage, 2020

Age	Bridegroom					Bride				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	89 338	73 229	3 466	525	12 118	89 338	77 733	2 140	356	9 109
<18	-	-	-	-	-	39	34	1	4	-
18	12	11	1	-	-	104	99	1	3	1
19	36	34	-	2	-	296	289	-	6	1
18-19	48	45	1	2	-	400	388	1	9	2
20	109	108	-	1	-	540	530	2	7	1
21	228	227	-	1	-	953	936	1	14	2
22	487	481	-	4	2	1 540	1 523	-	12	5
23	913	907	-	5	1	2 228	2 209	-	15	4
24	1 451	1 440	-	6	5	2 996	2 961	1	17	17
20-24	3 188	3 163	-	17	8	8 257	8 159	4	65	29
25	1 938	1 921	-	9	8	3 524	3 481	4	14	25
26	2 477	2 459	2	7	9	4 041	3 987	5	13	36
27	2 852	2 818	2	16	16	4 275	4 188	10	14	63
28	3 244	3 197	2	11	34	4 468	4 363	6	11	88
29	3 490	3 423	3	7	57	4 520	4 373	8	11	128
25-29	14 001	13 818	9	50	124	20 828	20 392	33	63	340
30	3 752	3 672	2	9	69	4 467	4 291	10	8	158
31	3 658	3 537	6	7	108	4 404	4 185	24	5	190
32	3 544	3 392	11	7	134	4 112	3 898	22	6	186
33	3 587	3 404	9	6	168	3 806	3 541	19	4	242
34	3 621	3 406	12	7	196	3 775	3 461	34	7	273
30-34	18 162	17 411	40	36	675	20 564	19 376	109	30	1 049

Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2020 (continued)

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
35	3 710	3 414	15	4	277	3 615	3 276	38	2	299
36	3 513	3 214	18	5	276	3 329	2 947	33	2	347
37	3 303	2 971	33	4	295	3 165	2 765	45	2	353
38	3 258	2 879	32	4	343	2 961	2 568	29	-	364
39	2 925	2 557	20	2	346	2 410	1 996	40	3	371
35-39	16 709	15 035	118	19	1 537	15 480	13 552	185	9	1 734
40	2 951	2 525	31	1	394	2 356	1 935	44	-	377
41	2 687	2 257	47	1	382	2 075	1 677	68	-	330
42	2 456	1 992	53	-	411	1 812	1 406	60	-	346
43	2 387	1 899	59	1	428	1 733	1 340	52	-	341
44	2 130	1 647	65	3	415	1 526	1 107	68	1	350
40-44	12 611	10 320	255	6	2 030	9 502	7 465	292	1	1 744
45	2 245	1 703	68	-	474	1 478	1 066	76	-	336
46	1 952	1 398	90	1	463	1 405	976	69	-	360
47	1 868	1 279	93	-	496	1 296	862	59	-	375
48	1 726	1 138	91	1	496	1 206	809	58	1	338
49	1 449	892	91	-	466	922	549	75	-	298
45-49	9 240	6 410	433	2	2 395	6 307	4 262	337	1	1 707
50	1 599	951	111	-	537	1 030	621	81	-	328
51	1 331	713	121	1	496	834	472	81	4	277
52	1 276	707	113	16	440	744	411	80	7	246
53	1 057	495	125	11	426	620	330	82	6	202
54	972	477	109	19	367	574	324	67	6	177
50-54	6 235	3 343	579	47	2 266	3 802	2 158	391	23	1 230

Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2020 (concluded)

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
55	931	445	116	24	346	515	280	62	6	167
56	867	373	104	27	363	461	256	49	7	149
57	756	314	116	27	299	393	208	56	19	110
58	740	309	125	26	280	404	198	44	13	149
59	603	240	106	21	236	293	135	50	8	100
55-59	3 897	1 681	567	125	1 524	2 066	1 077	261	53	675
60	663	290	99	34	240	333	183	47	20	83
61	575	235	135	21	184	236	97	46	11	82
62	534	201	121	29	183	251	103	54	13	81
63	437	179	83	29	146	183	70	45	8	60
64	365	153	86	12	114	151	63	41	6	41
60-64	2 574	1 058	524	125	867	1 154	516	233	58	347
65	373	153	97	18	105	142	68	35	14	25
66	327	117	90	14	106	132	57	32	4	39
67	280	107	73	9	91	106	33	34	6	33
68	260	99	80	15	66	99	40	27	3	29
69	164	51	64	2	47	69	18	22	1	28
65-69	1 404	527	404	58	415	548	216	150	28	154
70+	1 265	415	536	37	277	390	137	143	12	98
Unspecified	4	3	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-

Table 6 – Number of registered customary marriages in South Africa, 2011 – 2020

Year of registration	Number of marriages
2011	5 084
2012	4 555
2013	3 498
2014	3 062
2015	3 467
2016	3 978
2017	2 588
2018	3 160
2019	2 789
2020	1 585

Table 7 – Number and percentage distribution of customary marriages by province of marriage registration and age difference, 2020

Province of registration	Number			Same age	Unspecified	%				
	Total	Bridegroom older	Bridegroom younger			Total	Bridegroom older	Bridegroom younger	Same age	Unspecified
Total	1 585	1 388	119	73	5	100,0	87,6	7,5	4,6	0,3
Western Cape	7	5	2	-	-	100,0	71,4	28,6	0,0	0,0
Eastern Cape	167	156	4	6	1	100,0	93,4	2,4	3,6	0,6
Northern Cape	20	13	6	1	-	100,0	65,0	30,0	5,0	0,0
Free State	27	23	4	-	-	100,0	85,2	14,8	0,0	0,0
KwaZulu-Natal	708	607	60	39	2	100,0	85,7	8,5	5,5	0,3
North West	27	26	-	1	-	100,0	96,3	0,0	3,7	0,0
Gauteng	96	75	12	9	-	100,0	78,1	12,5	9,4	0,0
Mpumalanga	162	145	13	4	-	100,0	89,5	8,0	2,5	0,0
Limpopo	352	324	14	12	2	100,0	92,0	4,0	3,4	0,6
Unknown	18	13	4	1	-	100,0	72,2	22,2	5,6	0,0
Unspecified	1	1	-	-	-	100,0	100,0	0,0	0,0	0,0

Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2020

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
Total	1 585	1 585
<18	5	72
18	4	47
19	1	41
18-19	5	88
20	23	57
21	28	67
22	26	53
23	45	64
24	40	75
20-24	162	316
25	44	52
26	47	60
27	51	73
28	54	66
29	50	64
25-29	246	315
30	65	61
31	60	47
32	51	56
33	67	60
34	79	59
30-34	322	283

Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2020 (continued)

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
35	40	45
36	45	43
37	52	50
38	49	37
39	47	30
35-39	233	205
40	44	24
41	38	34
42	39	26
43	49	15
44	34	21
40-44	204	120
45	36	22
46	30	19
47	27	17
48	20	9
49	24	8
45-49	137	75
50	23	21
51	20	11
52	24	7
53	23	8
54	15	10
50-54	105	57

Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2020 (concluded)

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
55	12	10
56	19	5
57	23	2
58	11	5
59	17	2
55-59	82	24
60	10	3
61	5	4
62	5	2
63	7	3
64	5	1
60-64	32	13
65	7	4
66	5	3
67	4	2
68	4	1
69	4	0
65-69	24	10
70+	26	4
Unspecified	2	3

Table 9 – Number and percentage distribution of civil unions registered by province of registration, 2016 – 2020

Province of registration	Number					%				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Grand Total	1 331	1 357	1 650	1 771	1 471	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Western Cape	358	391	465	443	434	26,9	28,8	28,2	25,0	29,5
Eastern Cape	57	57	58	64	48	4,3	4,2	3,5	3,6	3,3
Northern Cape	15	16	20	18	6	1,1	1,2	1,2	1,0	0,4
Free State	36	42	46	48	32	2,7	3,1	2,8	2,7	2,2
KwaZulu-Natal	249	245	298	216	168	18,7	18,1	18,1	12,2	11,4
North West	29	43	40	41	22	2,2	3,2	2,4	2,3	1,5
Gauteng	494	507	632	779	659	37,1	37,4	38,3	44,0	44,8
Mpumalanga	22	32	31	28	23	1,7	2,4	1,9	1,6	1,6
Limpopo	17	15	13	23	5	1,3	1,1	0,8	1,3	0,3
Outside RSA	4	3	2	6	-	0,3	0,2	0,1	0,3	-
Unspecified	50	6	45	105	74	3,8	0,4	2,7	5,9	5,0

Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2020

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
Total	1 471	1 471
18	1	0
19	1	2
18-19	2	2
20	1	6
21	5	11
22	9	21
23	11	21
24	26	35
20-24	52	94
25	30	62
26	53	59
27	45	74
28	77	88
29	83	89
25-29	288	372
30	77	81
31	88	84
32	77	73
33	67	62
34	62	57
30-34	371	357

Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2020 (continued)

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
35	70	56
36	48	43
37	50	54
38	36	41
39	40	44
35-39	244	238
40	38	32
41	32	34
42	25	26
43	32	21
44	27	28
40-44	154	141
45	23	18
46	33	19
47	29	20
48	28	22
49	23	15
45-49	136	94
50	23	29
51	14	16
52	20	11
53	16	7
54	16	8
50-54	89	71

Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2020 (concluded)

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
55	9	12
56	16	12
57	9	9
58	13	4
59	8	10
55-59	55	47
60	9	6
61	8	5
62	9	11
63	4	3
64	4	5
60-64	34	30
65	6	1
66	2	4
67	1	3
68	6	0
69	6	1
65-69	21	9
70+	25	16

Table 11 – Number and percentage distribution of published divorces in South Africa by population group, 2011 – 2020

Year	Total	Numbers						%						
		Black African	Coloured	India/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified	Total	Black African	Coloured	India/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified
2011	20 980	7 517	3 473	1 359	6 730	-	1 901	100,0	35,8	16,6	6,5	32,1	-	9,1
2012	21 998	7 311	3 967	1 036	7 238	22	2 424	100,0	33,2	18,0	4,7	32,9	0,1	11,0
2013	23 885	8 656	3 888	1 425	7 561	24	2 331	100,0	36,2	16,3	6,0	31,7	0,1	9,8
2014	24 689	9 167	4 994	1 522	6 970	842	1 194	100,0	37,1	20,2	6,2	28,2	3,4	4,8
2015	25 260	10 841	4 213	1 566	6 588	837	1 215	100,0	42,9	16,7	6,2	26,1	3,3	4,8
2016	25 326	10 641	4 711	1 529	6 293	841	1 311	100,0	42,0	18,6	6,0	24,8	3,3	5,2
2017	25 390	11 309	4 517	1 401	6 048	833	1 282	100,0	44,5	17,8	5,5	23,8	3,3	5,0
2018	25 284	11 721	4 540	1 214	5 780	779	1 250	100,0	46,4	18,0	4,8	22,9	3,1	4,9
2019	23 710	10 677	4 502	1 299	5 268	816	1 148	100,0	45,0	19,0	5,5	22,2	3,4	4,8
2020	16 097	7 566	2 459	983	3 855	484	750	100,0	47,0	15,3	6,1	23,9	3,0	4,7

Table 12 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by type of occupation at the time of divorce, 2020

Occupation	Number		%	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Grand total	16 097	16 097	100,0	100,0
Professional, semi-professionals and technical occupations	2 327	2 566	14,5	15,9
Managers and administrators	2 111	1 180	13,1	7,3
Clerical and sales occupations	983	1 999	6,1	12,4
Transport delivery and communications	643	40	4,0	0,2
Services occupations	1 962	1 537	12,2	9,5
Farming and related occupations	75	9	0,5	0,1
Artisans apprentice and related occupations	807	114	5,0	0,7
Production foreman mine and quarry worker	419	142	2,6	0,9
Not economically active / Unemployed	2 799	3 979	17,4	24,7
Unspecified	3 971	4 531	24,7	28,1

Table 13 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and plaintiff, 2020

Population group	Number					%				
	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified
Grand Total	16 097	5 505	8 490	934	1 168	100,0	34,2	52,7	5,8	7,3
Black African	7 566	2 746	3 635	631	554	100,0	36,3	48,0	8,3	7,3
Coloured	2 459	784	1 400	113	162	100,0	31,9	56,9	4,6	6,6
Indian/Asian	983	327	567	26	63	100,0	33,3	57,7	2,6	6,4
White	3 855	1 291	2 280	116	168	100,0	33,5	59,1	3,0	4,4
Mixed	484	148	267	30	39	100,0	30,6	55,2	6,2	8,1
Unspecified	750	209	341	18	182	100,0	27,9	45,5	2,4	24,3

Table 14 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by province of divorce registration and plaintiff, 2020

Province of divorce registration	Number					%				
	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified
Grand Total	16 097	5 505	8 490	934	1 168	100,0	34,2	52,7	5,8	7,3
Western Cape	3 029	1 024	1 718	96	191	100,0	33,8	56,7	3,2	6,3
Eastern Cape	2 234	680	1 153	282	119	100,0	30,4	51,6	12,6	5,3
Northern Cape	515	172	246	17	80	100,0	33,4	47,8	3,3	15,5
Free State	1 092	452	575	22	43	100,0	41,4	52,7	2,0	3,9
KwaZulu-Natal	3 239	1 163	1 597	172	307	100,0	35,9	49,3	5,3	9,5
North West	629	235	333	25	36	100,0	37,4	52,9	4,0	5,7
Gauteng	4 044	1 321	2 163	248	312	100,0	32,7	53,5	6,1	7,7
Mpumalanga	818	280	426	56	56	100,0	34,2	52,1	6,8	6,8
Limpopo	497	178	279	16	24	100,0	35,8	56,1	3,2	4,8

Table 15 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and way of solemnisation of the marriage, 2020

Population group	Number				%			
	Total	Religious	DHA	Unspecified	Total	Religious	DHA	Unspecified
Total	16 097	7 475	7 095	1 527	100,0	46,4	44,1	9,5
Black African	7 566	2 378	4 817	371	100,0	31,4	63,7	4,9
Coloured	2 459	1 625	625	209	100,0	66,1	25,4	8,5
Indian/Asian	983	335	519	129	100,0	34,1	52,8	13,1
White	3 855	2 671	647	537	100,0	69,3	16,8	13,9
Mixed	484	210	224	50	100,0	43,4	46,3	10,3
Unspecified	750	256	263	231	100,0	52,9	54,3	47,7

Table 16 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by number of times married at the time of divorce, 2020

Number of times married	Number		%	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Total	16 097	16 097	100,0	100,0
Once	13 420	13 638	83,4	84,7
Twice	1 884	1 574	11,7	9,8
Three or more	250	194	1,6	1,2
Unspecified	543	691	3,4	4,3

Table 17 – Number of divorces by age and population group (male divorcees), 2020

Age group	Population group						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other	Unspecified
Total	16 097	7 783	2 610	1 118	3 995	51	540
<25	42	6	9	6	20	-	1
25-29	444	102	107	53	173	-	9
30-34	1 496	570	301	144	443	2	36
35-39	2 752	1 306	504	199	657	10	76
40-44	2 914	1 538	519	194	567	8	88
45-49	2 926	1 513	426	224	661	4	98
50-54	2 266	1 180	332	126	538	8	82
55-59	1 393	708	205	75	360	-	45
60-64	817	397	110	31	237	-	42
65-69	331	126	41	11	141	-	12
70-74	179	77	18	9	70	-	5
75-79	71	29	2	1	34	-	5
80+	28	9	3	1	14	-	1
Unspecified	438	222	33	44	80	19	40

Table 18 – Number of divorces by age group and population group (female divorcees), 2020

Age group	Population group						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other	Unspecified
Total	16 097	7 747	2 722	1 066	3 926	6	630
<25	156	34	31	19	71	-	1
25-29	1 094	427	199	102	341	-	25
30-34	2 414	1 131	461	160	584	-	78
35-39	3 354	1 830	554	201	653	-	116
40-44	2 887	1 577	457	189	570	-	94
45-49	2 510	1 198	410	181	608	1	112
50-54	1 679	767	297	104	431	-	80
55-59	882	372	158	54	261	1	36
60-64	483	167	74	23	197	-	22
65-69	189	63	26	8	81	-	11
70-74	65	14	13	3	30	-	5
75-79	23	5	2	-	16	-	-
80+	4	1	-	-	3	-	-
Unspecified	357	161	40	22	80	4	50

Table 19 – Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (male divorcees), 2020

Age group of husband	Duration of marriage									
	Total	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35+	Unspecified
Total	16 097	2 815	4 104	3 416	2 012	1 436	836	402	325	751
<25	42	36	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
25-29	444	297	117	2	-	-	-	-	-	28
30-34	1 496	642	660	126	4	-	-	-	-	64
35-39	2 752	616	1 170	739	102	3	-	-	-	122
40-44	2 914	414	819	972	449	110	3	-	-	147
45-49	2 926	296	574	710	634	463	124	1	-	124
50-54	2 266	203	304	392	431	441	309	88	2	96
55-59	1 393	122	163	195	182	230	234	156	46	65
60-64	817	58	93	102	95	95	105	105	128	36
65-69	331	31	40	40	31	30	23	31	82	23
70-74	179	22	28	21	17	17	15	9	46	4
75-79	71	9	13	14	5	10	6	2	9	3
80+	28	4	5	3	3	4	4	2	3	-
Unspecified	438	65	116	100	59	33	13	8	9	35

Table 20 – Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (female divorcees), 2020

Age group of wife	Duration of marriage									
	Total	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35+	Unspecified
Total	16 097	2 815	4 104	3 416	2 012	1 436	836	402	325	751
<25	156	120	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	19
25-29	1 094	602	416	22	-	-	-	-	-	54
30-34	2 414	705	1 133	460	14	-	-	-	-	102
35-39	3 354	540	1 163	1 151	323	28	-	-	-	149
40-44	2 887	305	638	841	703	272	12	-	-	116
45-49	2 510	206	310	467	521	598	271	26	-	111
50-54	1 679	148	172	237	229	316	341	145	7	84
55-59	882	57	95	87	101	125	115	148	107	47
60-64	483	40	45	49	47	45	55	55	122	25
65-69	189	11	18	20	25	22	20	13	56	4
70-74	65	13	6	12	5	2	5	3	16	3
75-79	23	2	4	2		2	2	1	10	-
80+	4	1	-	-	1		1		1	-
Unspecified	357	65	87	68	43	26	14	11	6	37

Table 21 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and divorces with and without children (aged below 18 years), 2020

Population group	Total	Divorces with children	Divorces without children	Total	Divorces with children	Divorces without children
Total	16 097	8 826	7 271	100,0	54,8	45,2
Black African	7 566	4 524	3 042	100,0	59,8	40,2
Coloured	2 459	1 519	940	100,0	61,8	38,2
Indian/Asian	983	507	476	100,0	51,6	48,4
White	3 855	1 715	2 140	100,0	44,5	55,5
Mixed	484	246	238	100,0	50,8	49,2
Unspecified	750	315	435	100,0	42,0	58,0

Table 22 – Number and percentage distribution of population group by children (aged below 18 years) affected by divorces, 2020

Population group	Total number of children involved	%
Total	14 627	100,0
Black African	7 705	52,7
White	2 693	18,4
Coloured	2 572	17,6
Indian/Asian	750	5,1
Mixed	389	2,7
Unspecified	518	3,5

EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. Purpose of the statistical release

The purpose of this statistical release is to provide information on marriages, unions and divorces recorded in South Africa in 2020. The data on marriages and unions was gathered from the Department of Home Affairs while information for divorces came from the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development through divorce courts, based on the number of divorce forms that had reached Stats SA.

2. Scope and coverage

The data on marriages currently cover registered civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions in South Africa. The divorce data cover cases for filed divorces from registered marriages and unions that had been granted; and forms on them received by Stats SA. Undocumented cases of abandonment or divorces that had been granted by religious or traditional authorities are not reported in the release.

3. Data sources

Stats SA obtains data on civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions directly from the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) head office. Data on divorces are collected from divorce courts using a standard structured questionnaire (Divorce Forms) prepared by Stats SA. The 2020 data came from both the old and the revised Divorce Forms since some of the courts have not switched to the revised form. The questionnaires are regularly completed by the courts as divorce decrees are granted. In 2020, Stats SA received and processed 16 097 divorce forms.

4. Limitations

Due to the few variables collected on married couples and divorcees, background information on couples and divorcees is limited. Therefore, the release focuses on presenting the demographic characteristics of the married and divorced persons.

5. Definitions of terms

Civil marriages: these are marriages registered according to the Marriage Act, 1961 (Act No. 25 of 1961). In the release, the term 'civil' is used to differentiate marriages that were solemnised by licensed DHA marriage officers from marriages that were solemnised by religious marriage officers.

Customary marriages: these are marriages that are negotiated, celebrated or concluded according to any of the systems of indigenous African customary law which exists in South Africa as prescribed in the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, 1998 (Act No. 120 of 1998).

Civil unions: refers to the voluntary union of two persons who are both 18 years of age or older, which is solemnised and registered by way of either a marriage or a civil partnership, in accordance with the procedures prescribed in the Civil Union Act, 2006 (Act No. 17 of 2006). Spouse-1 and Spouse-2 are used because the data does not specify the sex of the spouse.

Mixed population group: refers to couples with different population groups.

Occupation: occupation is coded using the *Standard Classification of Occupations*, Report No 09-90-01, First Edition, 1986 published by Stats SA.

Plaintiff: spouse(s) who filed the divorce case.

Unknown province of registration: the information about the name of placename is not known, as the province is derived from the provided placename.

Unspecified province of registration: the information about the name of the placename is not specified (missing), as the province is derived from the provided placename.

6. Symbols

- = Nil
- < = Less than
- ≥ = Equal to and greater than

7. References

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Marriages and divorces, 2020

Published by Statistics South Africa, Private Bag X44, Pretoria 0001

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Enquiries:

Telephone: (012) 310 8600 (user information services)
(012) 316 9301 (technical enquiries)
(012) 310 8251 (orders)

Email: TshwaroG@statssa.gov.za (technical enquiries)
info@statssa.gov.za (user information services)

Postal address: Private Bag X44, Pretoria, 0001

Produced by Stats SA