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Marriages and divorces

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PREFACE

This statistical release presents information on civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions that were registered in 2010 in the South African national marriage registration systems of the Department of Home Affairs. It reports on the trends and patterns of the types of marriages and civil unions by highlighting age differentials of spouses. The release also presents information on divorces that were granted in 2010 by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development through 12 of the 62 divorce courts mandated to deal with divorce cases in South Africa. In addition to the trend in the number of divorces, the release discusses the characteristics of the plaintiffs, duration of marriage and the number of children affected by the divorces.

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KEY FINDINGS

1. Introduction

There are two main sources of marriage and divorce statistics in South Africa namely those compiled from censuses and surveys and those compiled from vital registration and administrative records. The data from each of these sources give different aspects of information on marriages and divorces in the country. Census and survey data are by nature, subjective individual information that provide cross-sectional data on individuals' marital status (single, married, divorced, widowed, etc). Therefore marriage and divorce in this context cover different types of marriages and associated divorces that took place at different periods in the people's lives. However, not all types of marriages and divorces are registered.

The specific types of marriage and divorce that can be registered in South Africa are stipulated and governed by legal frameworks. Unlike surveys, registered marriages and divorces data are based on continuous recording of these events as they take place. The management of registered marriages is the responsibility of the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). Civil marriages are administered through the Marriage 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 governs civil unions came into operation on 30 November 2006. The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD) is responsible for handling matters relating to the dissolution of registered marriages and civil unions. This responsibility of the department is mandated through the Divorce Act, 1979 as amended (Act No.70 of 1979) and the Jurisdiction of Regional Courts Amendment Act, 2008 (Act No. 31 of 2008) as amended which came into effect on 9 August 2010.

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) publishes marriage data on citizens and permanent residents that are collected through the civil registration systems of DHA. Before 2008, the data in the annual release covered only civil marriages. However in 2008, 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. In addition to marriages and civil unions, Stats SA publishes data on divorces from civil marriages. The divorces are successful applications for divorces in accordance with a decree that has been issued. The divorce cases belong to civil marriages that were registered in different years but whose divorce decrees were granted in the same year. Both the marriages and the divorces data are based on the calendar year. It is important to note that although both the data on civil marriages and divorces are collected in the same year, the two data sets are not linked to each other. Hitherto, only divorce cases from civil marriages have been published. Publication of statistics on divorces from registered customary marriages and civil unions will be made available when sufficient data have been registered.

As a result of coming into operation of the Jurisdiction of Regional Courts Amendment Act, 2008, 62 courts currently have the mandate to deal with divorce cases. This means that there are additional 50 courts to the 12 courts that were providing Stats SA with data on divorces before the new Act came into effect. Data from the new courts were not included in this statistical release because very few divorce forms had been received from some of these courts at the time of processing the 2010 data. Stats SA will start publishing data from the new courts in the 2011 *Marriages and Divorces* annual release. The information in the current release is based on divorces from civil marriages that were granted in 2010 from the 12 courts.

2. Marriages

2.1 Civil marriages

2.1.1 Trends in civil marriages (2001–2010)

As presented in Table 1, in 2010, 170 826 civil marriages of South African citizens and permanent residents were registered. This number includes 3 830 (2,2%) marriages of South African citizens and permanent residents that were solemnised outside the borders of South Africa but subsequently registered in South Africa. Information provided in Table 1 also shows that the number of registered marriages has generally been fluctuating over the last ten years (2001–2010). The highest number of marriages was recorded in 2008 (186 522) whilst 2001 recorded the lowest (134 581) in the ten year period. The 2010 figure of 170 826 shows a decrease of 1 163 (0,7%) from 171 989 marriages recorded in 2009. As shown in Figure 1, the warmer months, beginning from September and peaking in December, are generally the most popular months for solemnising marriages. In 2010, the highest number of marriages [27 058; (15,8%)], took place in December compared to August that recorded the lowest number of marriages, [10 129; (5,9%)].

2.1.2 Solemnisation of marriages

Only licensed marriage officers are required by the Marriage Act, 1961 to solemnise civil marriages and issue a marriage certificate. Civil marriages are generally solemnised at the offices of the DHA and at chapels or religious buildings. After a solemnisation ceremony, the marriage officer issues the couple with an unabridged marriage certificate (BI-27) free of charge and submits the marriage register at any DHA office for the recording of the marriage particulars in the National Population Register (NPR).

In Table 2, these types of solemnisation of marriages are grouped under 'civil' i.e. marriages solemnised by DHA marriage officers and 'religious' marriages for those solemnised by priests/religious persons. The 2010 data show that 91 250 (53,4%) of the 170 826 marriages were solemnised by 'civil' rites and 52 817 (30,9%) by 'religious' rites. The type of solemnisation rite was not specified in 26 759 marriages (15,7%).

Table 2 also provides information on the number of civil marriages by way of solemnisation and province of marriage registration. The province of registration is not necessarily the province of the place of usual residence of the couple since couples could marry at a place of their choice and the registration of the marriage can take place in a DHA office of choice of the couple. In addition, a marriage officer can register the marriages he or she solemnises in any DHA office.

The results presented in Table 2 show that in 2010, the highest number of all marriages was registered in Gauteng [41 396; (24,2%)], followed by KwaZulu-Natal [25 862; (15,1%)]. Furthermore, the table shows that Western Cape had the highest proportion of registered marriages solemnised by 'religious' rites (48,3%) and Limpopo had the lowest (12,1%). The highest proportion of marriages solemnised by 'civil' rites was observed in Limpopo (74,3%) and the lowest in Northern Cape (32,1%). However, these results need to be interpreted with caution given the proportion of civil marriages with unspecified way of solemnisation that differed widely by province. For example, 31,7% of marriages in Northern Cape did not state the way of solemnisation compared to 2,7% with the same problem in Free State.

2.1.3 Marital status at the time of marriage

Data presented in Table 3 indicate that most of the marriages in 2010 for both bridegrooms and brides were first time marriages. For bridegrooms, there were 142 013 (83,1%) bachelors, 5 497 (3,2%) divorcees and 2 738 (1,6%) widowers. For the brides, 149 159 (87,3%) were spinsters whilst 3 731 (2,2%) were divorcees and 2 145 (1,3%) were widows. The marital status of 20 578 (12,0%) bridegrooms and 15 791 (9,2%) brides was not recorded.

It is also observed from Table 4 that irrespective of their marital status, men generally married women who had never been married (spinsters). Thus, 133 738 (94,2%), 3 124 (56,8%) and 2 239 (81,8%) bachelors, divorcees and widowers respectively married spinsters. In addition, irrespective of the fact that more divorcees and widowers married spinsters, the proportion of male divorcees who married female divorcees (18,8%) was higher than the proportion that married widows (1,4%). Similarly, the proportion of widowers who married widows (14,2%) was higher than the proportion that married female divorcees (1,5%).

2.1.4 Age at the time of marriage

Population scientists are interested in the age at first marriage or union because of its theoretical link to exposure to the risk of pregnancy, childbearing and ultimately to fertility. 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 minors (persons under 18 years old). These minors require the consent of a parent, a guardian or a commissioner of welfare before entering into a marriage. In addition to the above consent, boys under 18 years and girls under 16 years of age require the consent of the Minister of Home Affairs before they can marry.

As shown in Table 5, in 2010, marriages of 13 bridegrooms and 289 brides aged less than 18 years were registered. Virtually all these bridegrooms and brides were marrying for the first time. In addition, data in Table 5 and Figure 2 indicate that the highest number of bachelors, 36 791 (25,9%) came from the 30–34 age group whereas the highest number of spinsters, 49 070 (32,9%) came from the 25–29 age group. Figure 2 further shows that there were more spinsters compared to bachelors at younger ages (less than 30 years) and vice versa at older ages (30 years and older).

It is observed from Figure 3a to Figure 3d that women generally enter marriage at younger ages than men. The median age for all the 2010 bridegrooms was 34 years compared with 30 years for brides as presented in Table 5 and Figure 3a. However as shown in Figures 3b, 3c and 3d, some age differences are observed when the marital status at the time of current marriage is considered. For first time marriages, the median age for bachelors was 33 years and that of spinsters was 29 years giving a difference of four years (see Figure 3b). The ages of brides remained the same throughout the 5-year period while for males it remained at 32 years between 2006 and 2009 and increased by one year in 2010.

For remarriages, the median ages for widowers and widows in 2010 (Figure 3c) were 47 years and 30 years respectively, resulting in a seventeen years' age gap. The median ages for widowers consistently increased every year from 42 years in 2006 to 47 years in 2010 whereas the median ages for widows were quite stable at 29 years from 2006 to 2008. Although it increased by one year to 30 years in 2009, it remained the same for 2010. Median ages at marriage for divorcees are shown in Figure 3d. It is observed that the median ages for both male and female divorcees were quite stable over the five-year period. They both showed an increase of only two years from 50 years in 2003 to 52 years in 2010 for male divorcees and 45 years to 47 years for female divorcees during the same period. There was a five year difference in the median ages between male and female divorcees in 2010.

Despite the fact that men tend to marry younger women, data in Table 4 indicate that in 2010, 24 648 (14,4%) bridegrooms were younger than their brides whilst 12 493 (7,3%) 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 as presented in Tables 4 and Figures 4a, 4b, and 4c. However, the magnitude differs by the marital status of the spouses at the time of marriage. For example, as much as 43,4% of bachelors who married divorcees were younger than their brides (Figure 4a) and 17,9% of male divorcees who married widowed women were also younger than their brides (Figure 4c). The smallest percentage (5,8%) was observed for male divorcees marrying spinsters who were older than themselves (Figure 4c).

2.2 Customary marriages

2.2.1 Trends in the registration of customary marriages (2003–2010)

In 2010, 9 996 customary marriages were registered at the Department of Home Affairs indicating a decline of 26,0% from 15 506 customary marriages registered in 2009. It is observed from Table 6 that the number of registered customary marriages has been fluctuating since 2003. The highest number (20 301) of registrations was recorded in 2004 whilst the 2010 number (9 996) was the lowest. Since the registration of customary marriages is relatively new, it is of interest to observe the proportion of marriages that were registered in the same year the marriage took place. It is shown in Figure 5 that during the 2006–2010 period, the proportion of marriages that were registered in the same year they took place, ranged from 4,7% in 2007 to 10,2% in 2010. Although the highest proportion was observed among the 2010 registered marriages, it is worth noting that the proportions have been fluctuating over the years.

2.2.2 Marital status at the time of customary marriage

Since the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (Act No. 120 of 1998) does not prohibit a male person already in a customary marriage to enter into a civil marriage or another customary marriage, 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, in the absence of data on marital status at the time of the registration of customary marriage, this distinction cannot be made.

2.2.3 Age at the time of customary marriage

The age distribution of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage is presented in Table 7. In 2010, there were 57 (0,6%) bridegrooms and 758 (7,6%) brides who were younger than 18 years. As observed from Figure 6, bridegrooms were generally older than brides. In 2010, the median age of bridegrooms was 32 years and that of brides was 26 years indicating a one year increase for both bridegroom and brides when compared to 31 years and 25 years respectively in 2009. Since 2006, the median ages of bridegrooms have been fluctuating between 30 and 31 years until 2010 when the age increased to 32 years. On the other hand, although the median age for brides in 2006 was 26 years, it dropped to 24 years in 2007, increased to 25 years in 2008 and 2009 and attained the highest age of 26 years in 2010. There was an age difference of six years each year in the median ages of bridegrooms and brides between 2007 and 2010.

A further comparison of the ages of bridegrooms and brides (see Figure 7) shows that in 2010, 85,6% of bridegrooms were older than their brides whilst 9,8% were younger than their brides and 4,6% were of the same age. This pattern remained largely the same between 2006 and 2007.

2.3 Civil unions

2.3.1 Trends in the registration of civil unions (2007–2010)

Data in Table 8 show that in 2010, 888 civil unions were registered (including the registration of two civil unions of South African citizens and permanent residents living outside South Africa). In general, the number of civil unions registered in South Africa increased from 2007 to 2010. The provincial distribution of the 2010 registered civil unions indicates that Gauteng, (391) and Western Cape (261) continue to be the provinces with the highest number of registrations. In total, nearly three quarters (73,4%) of civil unions in 2010 were registered in these two provinces. Since 2008, the lowest number of registered civil unions has been recorded in North West with only 9 civil unions registered in 2010.

2.3.2 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 they were in. However, in the absence of data on marital status at the time of the registration of civil union, this distinction cannot be made.

2.3.3 Age at the time of civil union

Spouses are distinguished as spouse-1 and spouse-2 based on the information completed by the spouses at the time of civil union registration. 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 9. It is observed that none of the spouses-1 was younger than 20 years old; however there were 12 of spouses-2 that were less than 20 years old. The number of spouses-2 were more than the number of spouses-1 up to age group 30–34 after which there were more spouses-1 than spouses-2.

As observed from Figure 8, the median ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of solemnisation of the civil union declined since 2007. Furthermore, the median ages of spouses-1 were greater than those of spouses-2. Over the four-year period, the yearly differences in the median ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 ranged between three and four years. The median ages of spouses-1 declined by three years from 40 years in 2007 to 37 years in 2010. Similarly, the median ages of spouses-2 declined by two years from 36 years in 2007 to 34 years in 2010. Data in Figure 9 further show that spouses-1 were generally older than spouses-2. In 2010, 64,0% of spouses-1 were older than their spouses, whilst 30,0% were younger than their spouses and 6,1% were of the same age.

3. Divorces

3.1 Trends in divorces (2001–2010)

The data on divorces reported in this statistical release only covers data from 12 courts as highlighted in Section 1 based exclusively on divorces from civil marriages.

As presented in Table 10, in 2010, data on 22 936 divorces from civil marriages were processed, indicating a drop of 7 827 or 25,4% from the 30 763 cases processed in 2009. Generally, the total numbers of divorces show a fluctuating trend over the ten-year period. The table also provides divorce data for the period 2001–2010 classified by year the divorce was granted and by population group. The distribution of couples divorcing by population group shows that the highest proportion of divorces between 2001 and 2007 came from the white population group followed by the black African population group. In 2001, 43,2% of the divorcees were from the white population group whereas 23,1% came from the African black group. However, from 2008 to 2010, the pattern changed. The black African population exhibited the highest proportion of divorces followed by the white population group. Thus 35,6% of the 2010 divorcees came from the African black population group and 30,5% from the white group. The proportions of the coloured and the Indian/Asian groups were quite variable during the ten year period.

3.2 Characteristics of plaintiffs

The 2010 data presented in Table 11 show that there were more female 11 309 (49,3%) than male 7 999 (34,9%) plaintiffs. The population group was unspecified in 15,8% of divorces. With the exception of females from the black African population group who had a lower proportion of plaintiffs compared to males, the proportion of female plaintiffs from the other population groups was above 50,0%. For example, 39,5% of black African plaintiffs were females compared to 57,6% female white plaintiffs.

Table 12 provides information on the occupation of the plaintiffs. It is noted that a high proportion of the plaintiffs (27,9% of the males and 30,1% of the females) did not indicate the type of occupation they were engaged in at the time of divorce. In addition, 13,9% and 20,7% of the males and females respectively were not economically active at the time of divorce. Less than a quarter of males (22,3%) and females (19,1%) were in the professional and managerial occupations. Very few plaintiffs were in farming and other occupations.

3.3 Solemnisation of dissolving marriages

Data presented in Table 13 show that 11 063 (48,2%) of the 2010 divorce cases were from marriages that were solemnised by religious rites and 9 387 (40,9%) by 'civil' rites. This indicates that in general, the marriages that are eventually dissolved are mostly solemnised by religious rites. A similar pattern was also found among the white and the coloured population groups. However, a higher proportion of dissolving marriages from the black African (62,7%), Indian/Asian (55,8%) and the mixed (58,6%) population groups were for marriages solemnised by civil rites.

3.4 Number of times married

Table 14 shows that the 2010 divorce cases for both males and females were mainly from people who had married once. About 80,0% of divorces for males and females were from first marriages compared to approximately 10,0% from second time marriages. About 2,0% of males and females were getting divorced for at least the third time.

3.5 Age at the time of divorce

The median age at divorce in 2010 was 41 years for males and 38 years for females. The median age for males was down from 42 years in 2009 but that of females remained unchanged. This indicates that males generally divorced at older ages than females, with a difference of about three years in 2010. The pattern of median age by population group and sex in 2010 shown in Figure 10 was basically the same as that observed in 2009 where black African males had the highest median age (44 years) at the time of divorce and females from the Indian/Asian group had the lowest median age (35 years) at the time of divorce. Furthermore, the 2010 data for black African women (38 years) show a drop of one year from 39 years in 2009 whereas the ages for white males and females had increased by one year from 41 and 38 years to 42 and 39 years respectively.

Detailed information on age by population groups and sex is presented in Figure 11 and Figure 12 as well as Table 15 and Table 16. Although there are differences in the ages at which most males and females from the various population groups divorced, the age patterns are quite similar. The data reveal that there were fewer divorces among the young (less than 25 years old) and the old (55 years and older). For male divorcees, the peak age group at divorce was 35–39 for each of the population groups with the exception of the black Africans which peaked at 40–44 (Figure 11). In the case of females, the peak age group was 35–39 for each of the population groups except the Indian/Asian group that peaked at 30–34 and the mixed group that did not show a particular pattern (Figure 12).

3.6 Duration of marriage of divorcing couples

Data provided in Table 17 and Table 18 indicate that divorces granted in 2010 indicate that the largest number 5 989 (27,3%) of the divorces lasted between five and nine years. This group is followed by marriages that lasted less than five years 4 577 (20,9%). Thus, almost half (47,7%) of the 22 936 divorces in 2010 were marriages that lasted less than 10 years.

According to Figure 13, as the duration of marriages increased the number of divorces decreased. Furthermore, the duration of marriages for divorcees from the black African, coloured and Indian/Asian population groups was between five to nine years whereas for the white population group those that divorced before the fifth anniversary were slightly more than those divorcing between five and nine years.

3.7 Divorces involving couples with children

In 2010, 12 486 (54,4%) of the 22 936 divorces had children younger than 18 years (see Table 19). The proportions of divorces with children were quite high among the coloured population group (64,9%), black Africans (58,0%) and the Indians/Asians (55,4%). As provided in Table 20, the distribution of the number of children affected by divorce shows that 37,9% were from the black African population group; 27,6% from the white population group and 17,3% from the coloured population group. Overall, there were 20 383 children (younger than 18 years old) involved in divorce indicating that, on the average, there was between one and two children per divorce.

4. Summary and concluding remarks

This statistical release has provided information on civil and customary marriages, civil unions and divorces for 2010 based on data from the South African national marriage registration systems of the Department of Home Affairs and data of divorces granted by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. The information on marriages and divorces is important for understanding the formation and dissolution of marriage relationships.

In total, 170 826 civil marriages were registered in South Africa in 2010, most of which were solemnised by civil rites. The highest number of civil marriages was registered in Gauteng, followed by Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal and the lowest registered in Northern Cape. The majority of civil marriages in 2010 for both brides and bridegrooms were first time marriages, with women generally entering into marriage at younger ages than men.

The number of registered customary marriages was 9 996 in 2010, which declined from a total of 15 506 customary marriages registered in 2009. The majority of bridegrooms were older than their brides, with the gap in median ages at registration of customary marriage much wider for customary marriages than other types of marriages.

Less than one thousand (888) civil unions were registered in South Africa in 2010, most of which were registered in Gauteng and Western Cape and lowest in North West. Spouses recorded as spouse-1 were usually older than those recorded as spouse-2.

With regard to divorces, the data from 12 of the 62 courts showed that 22 936 divorces were granted in South Africa in 2010. Among these divorcees, there was an apparent increase in the proportion of divorces for black Africans from 2001 to 2010 while the proportion decreased for the white population group. Divorces were mainly from people who had married for the first time. There were more female than male plaintiffs although males generally divorced at a later age than females. About 20 383 children were affected by divorces that took place in 2010.

Overall, the information provided in this release showed fluctuations over time in the number of marriages, unions and divorces in the country. 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 plaintiff for the divorces data. Concerted efforts are needed from the public, the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development and Statistics South Africa to improve the quality and content of information on marriages and divorces in South Africa.

Figure 1. Number of civil marriages by month of solemnisation, 2006–2010

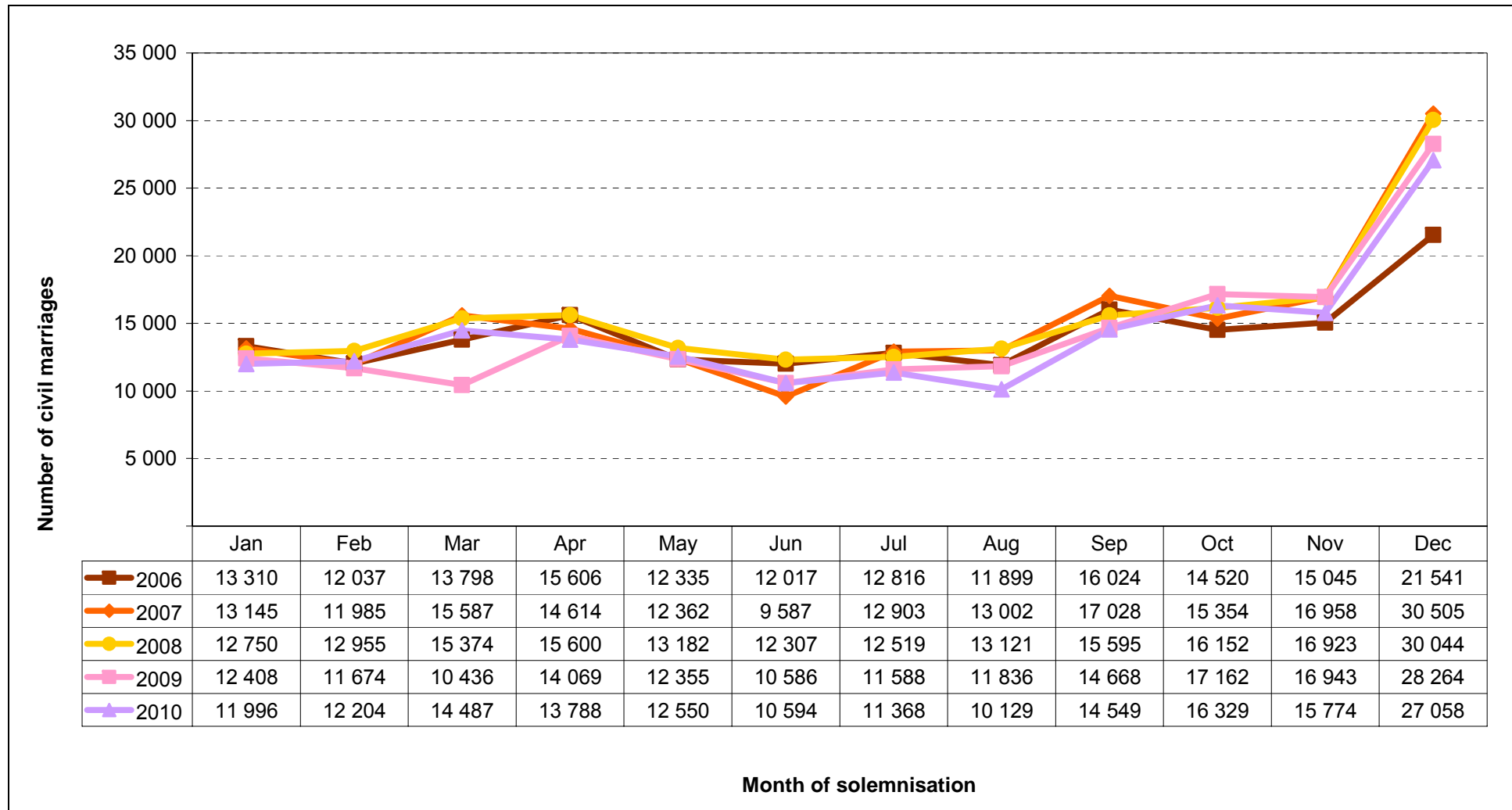


Figure 2. Number of civil marriages for bachelors and spinsters by age group, 2010

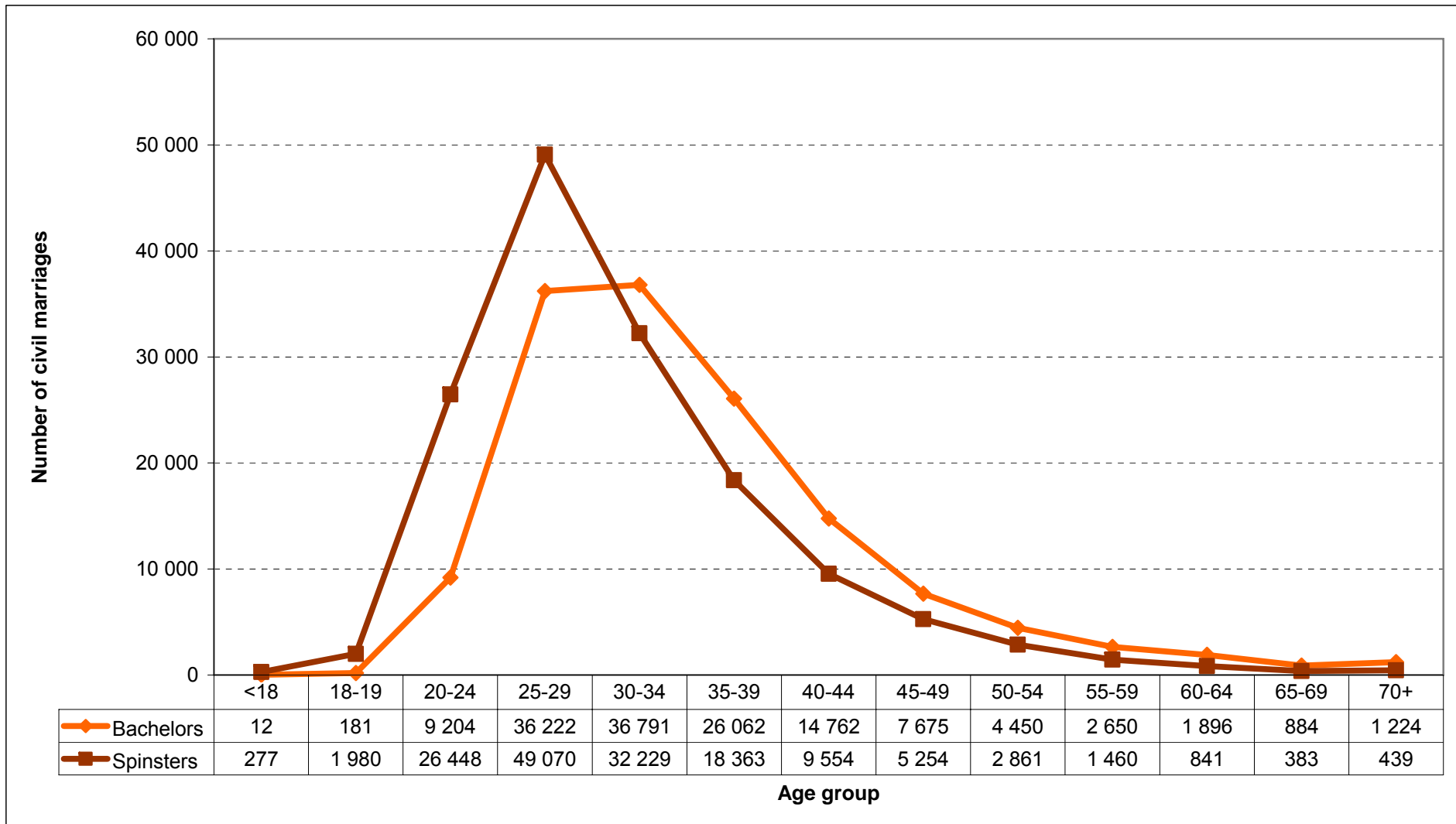


Figure 3a. Median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of civil marriage, 2006–2010

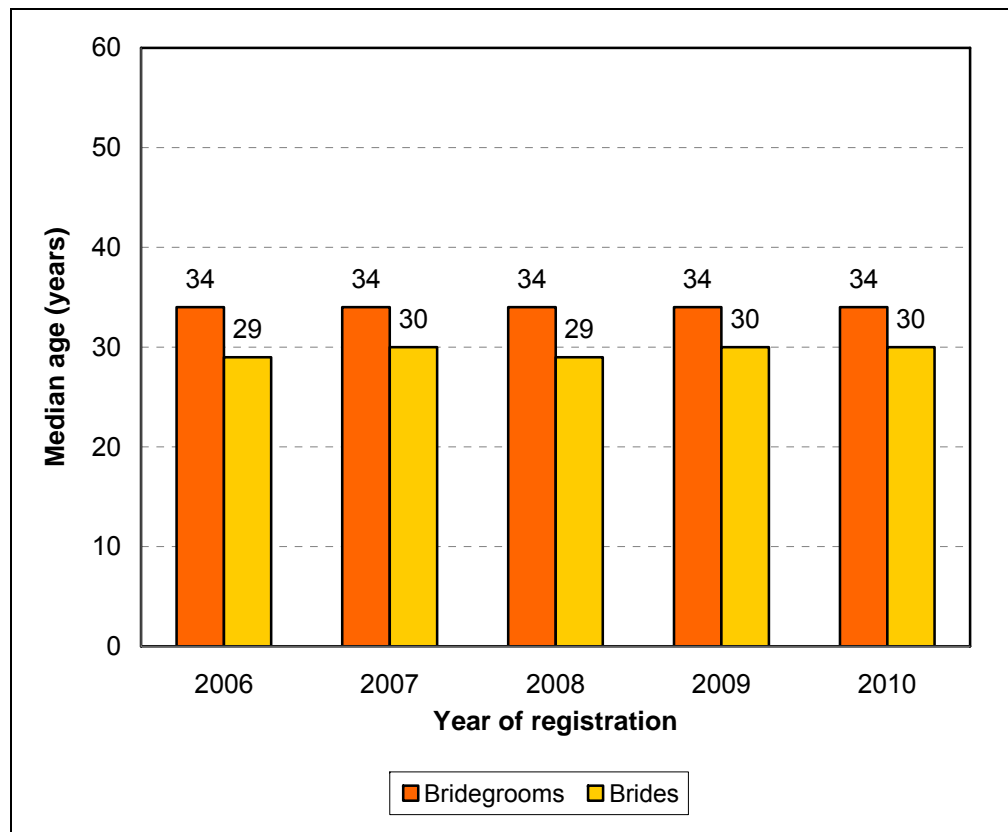


Figure 3b. Median ages of bachelors and spinsters at the time of civil marriage, 2006–2010

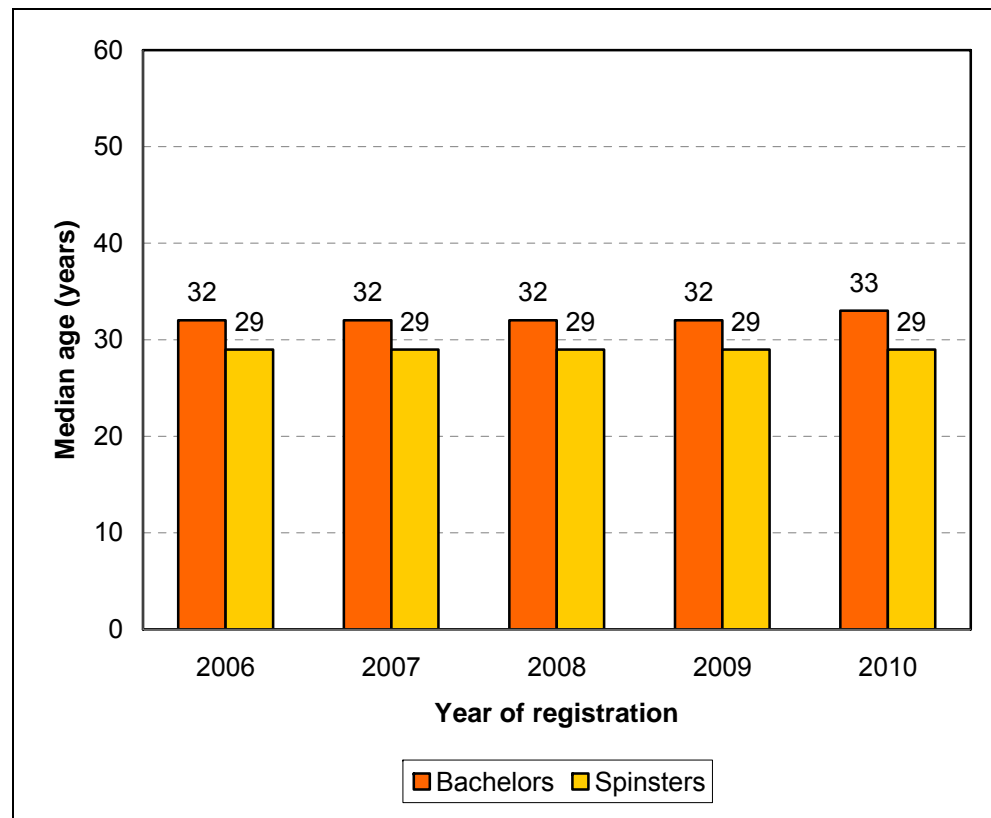


Figure 3c. Median ages of widowers and widows at the time of civil marriage, 2006–2010

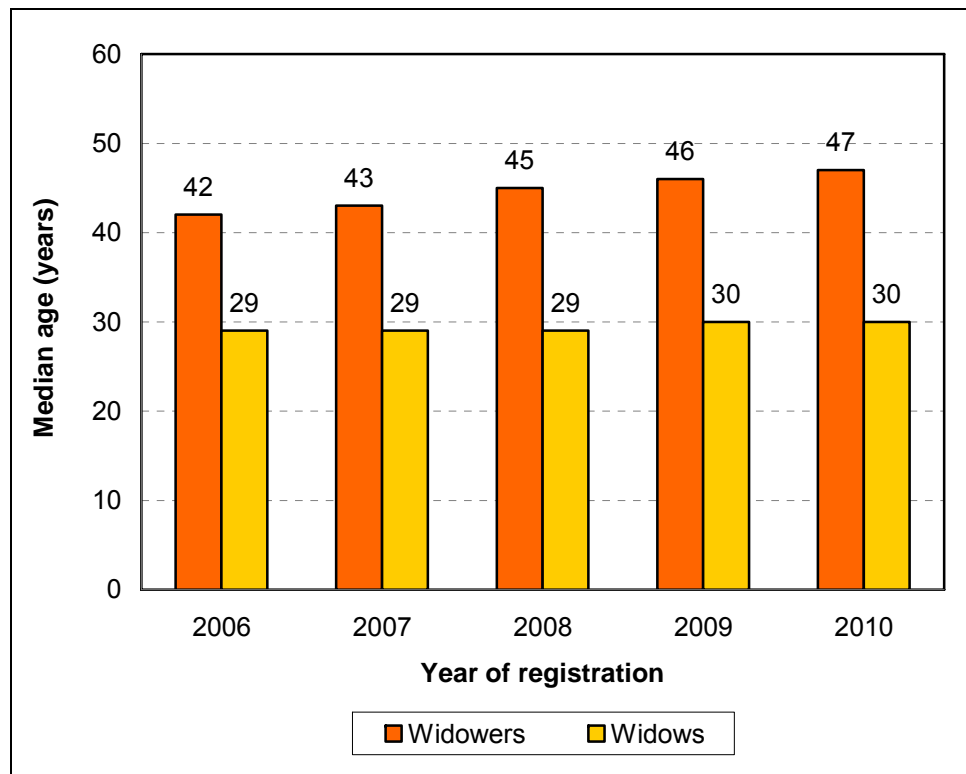


Figure 3d. Median ages of male and female divorcees at the time of civil marriage, 2006–2010

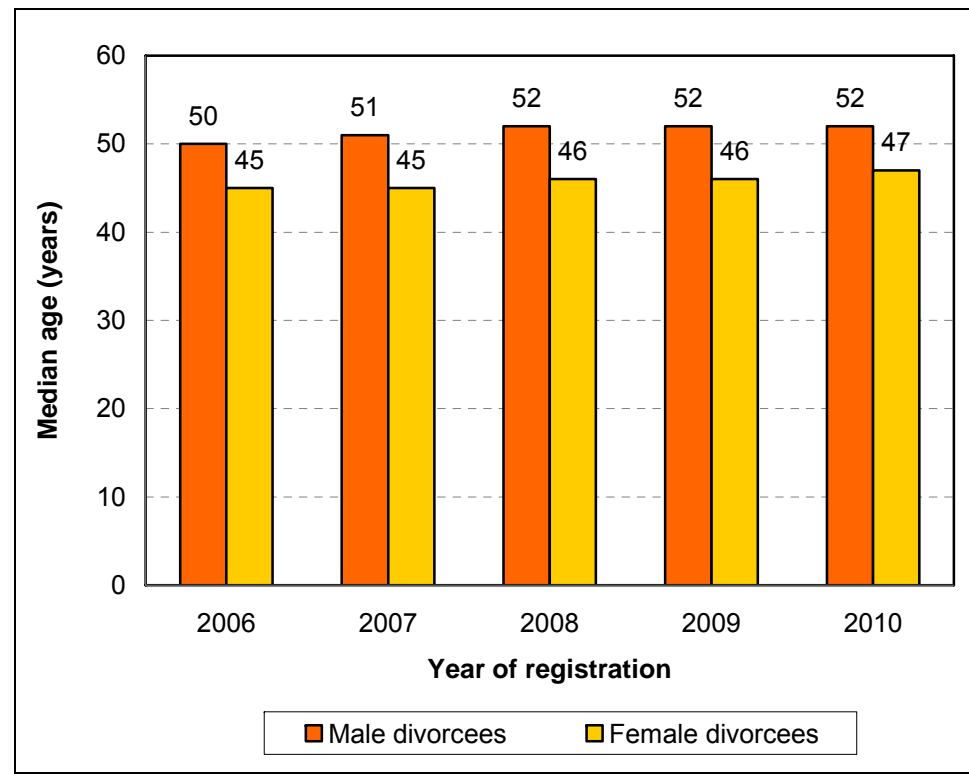
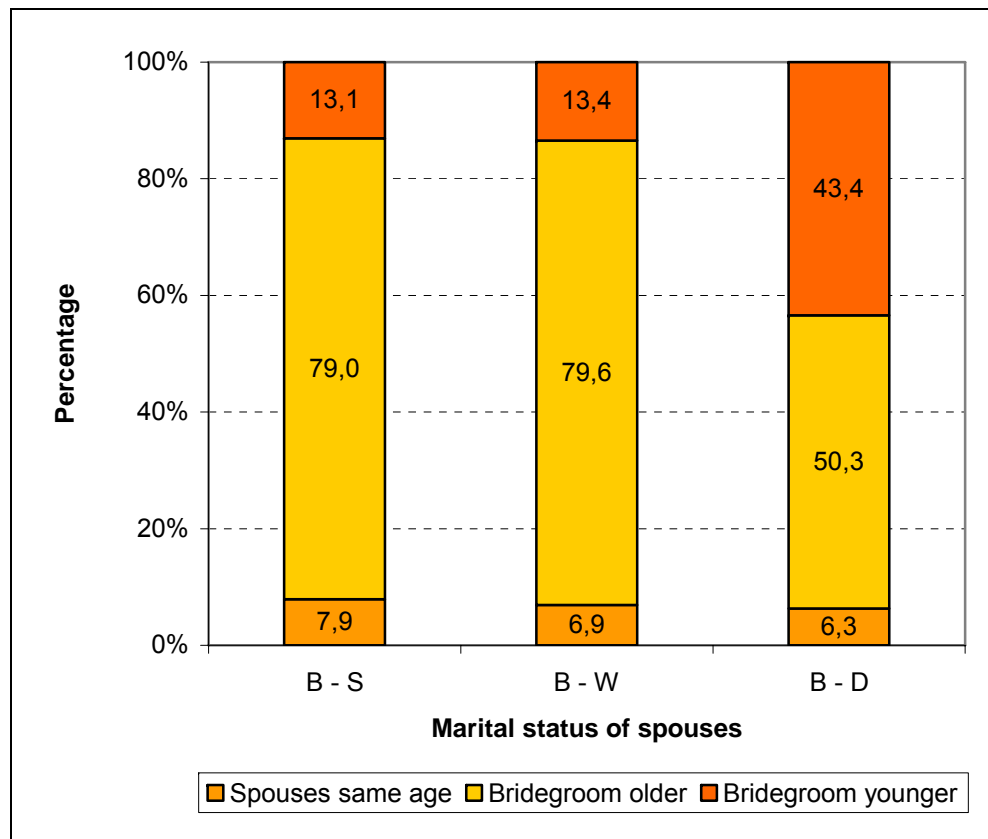
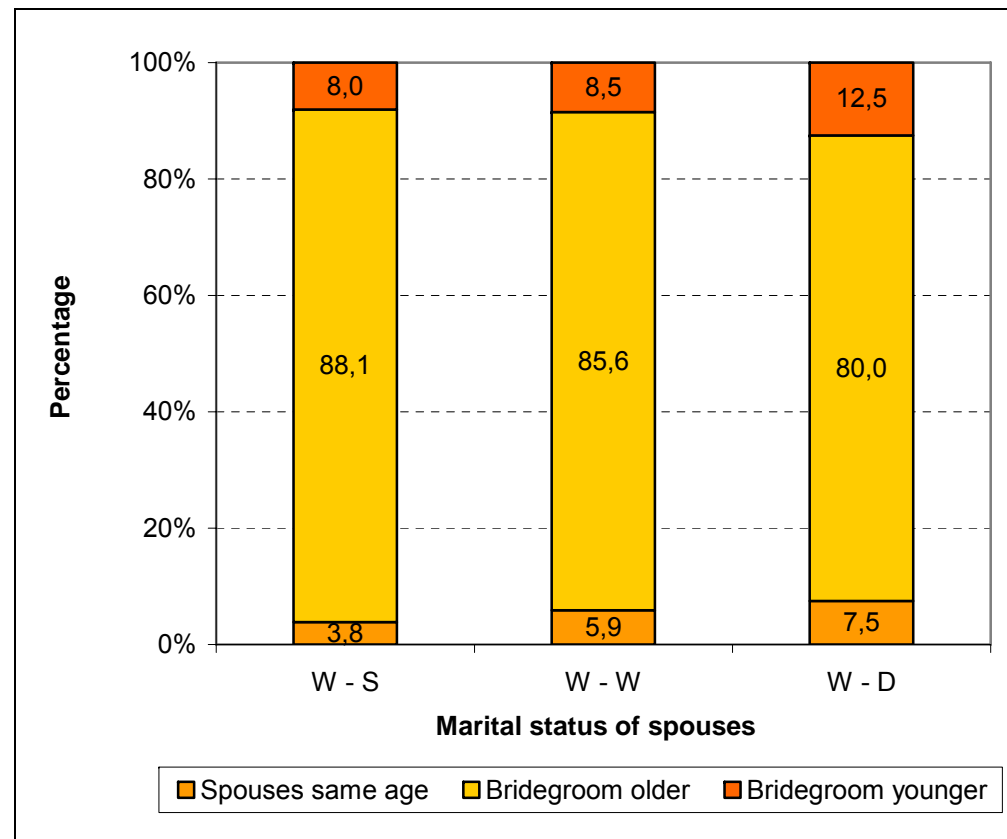


Figure 4a. Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriages (bachelors), 2010*



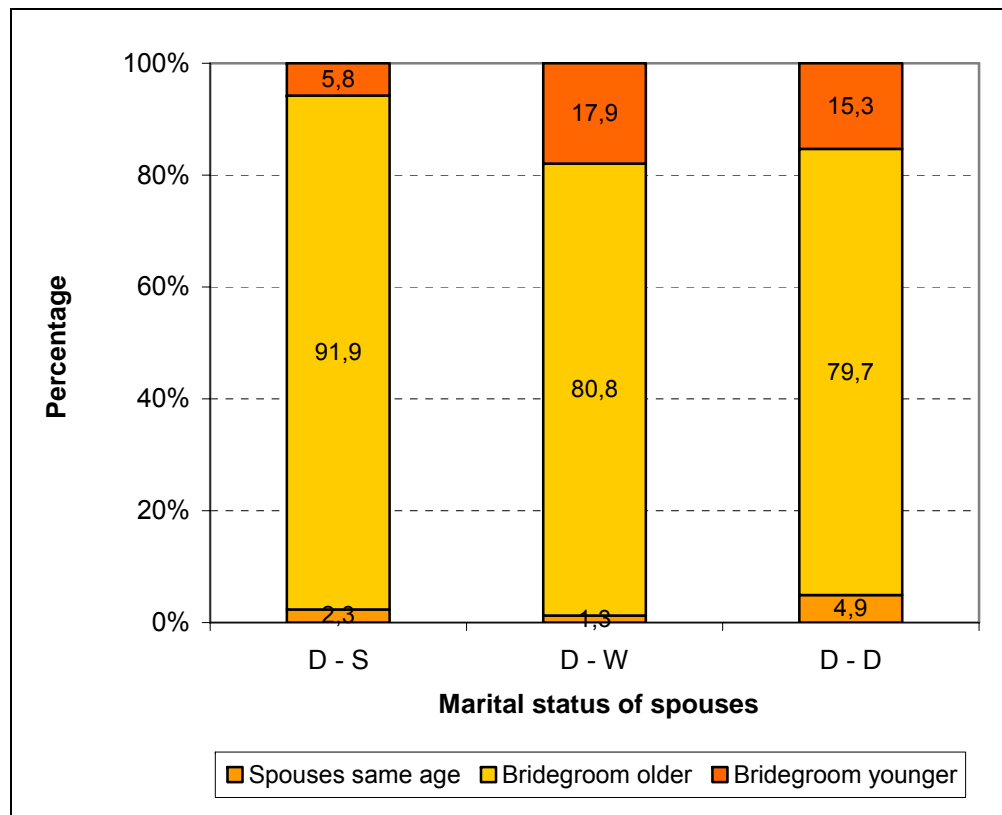
* B - S = Bachelor to Spinster
 B - W = Bachelor to Widow
 B - D = Bachelor to Divorcee

Figure 4b. Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriages (widowers), 2010*



* W - S = Widower to Spinster
 W - W = Widower to Widow
 W - D = Widower to Divorcee

Figure 4c. Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriages (divorcees), 2010*



* D - S = Divorcee to Spinster
 D - W = Divorcee to Widow
 D - D = Divorcee to Divorcee

Figure 5. Percentage distribution of customary marriages by year of marriage and time it took to register the marriage, 2006–2010

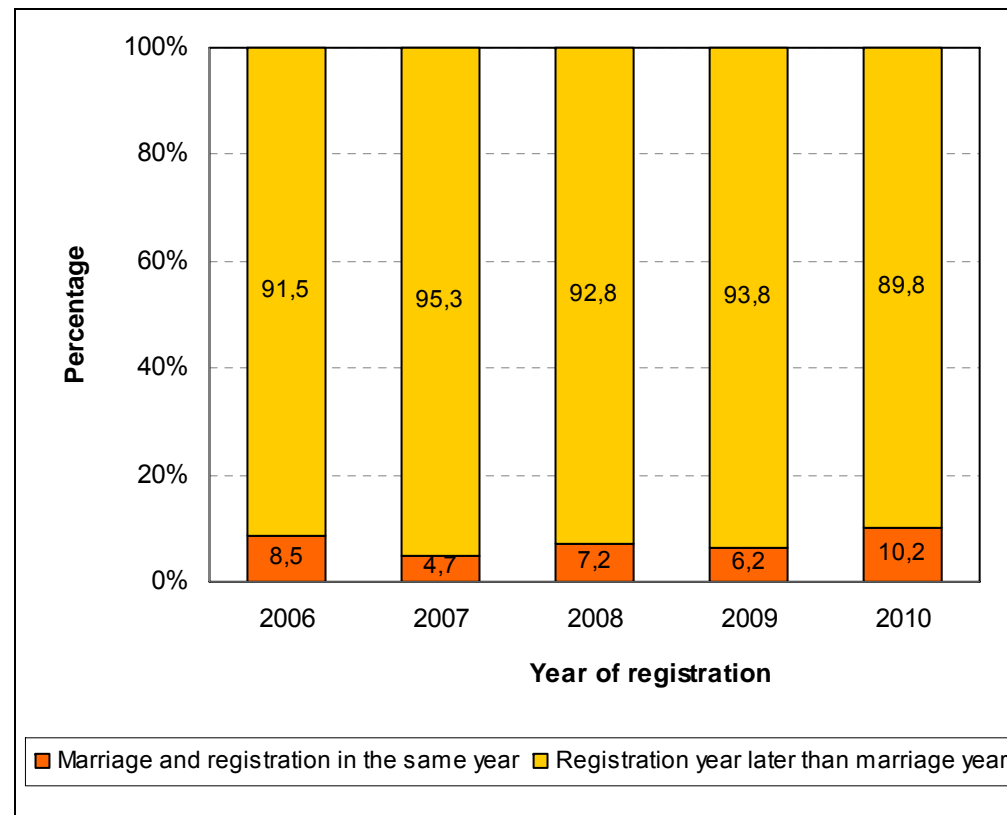


Figure 6. Median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of customary marriage, 2006–2010

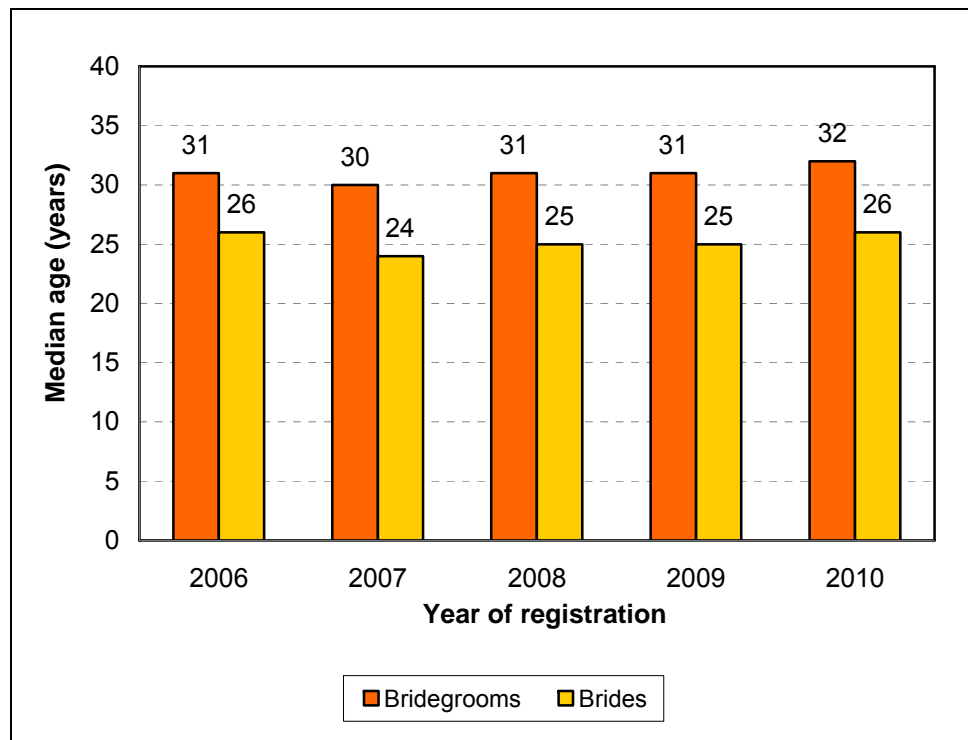


Figure 7. Percentage distribution of customary marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriages, 2006–2010

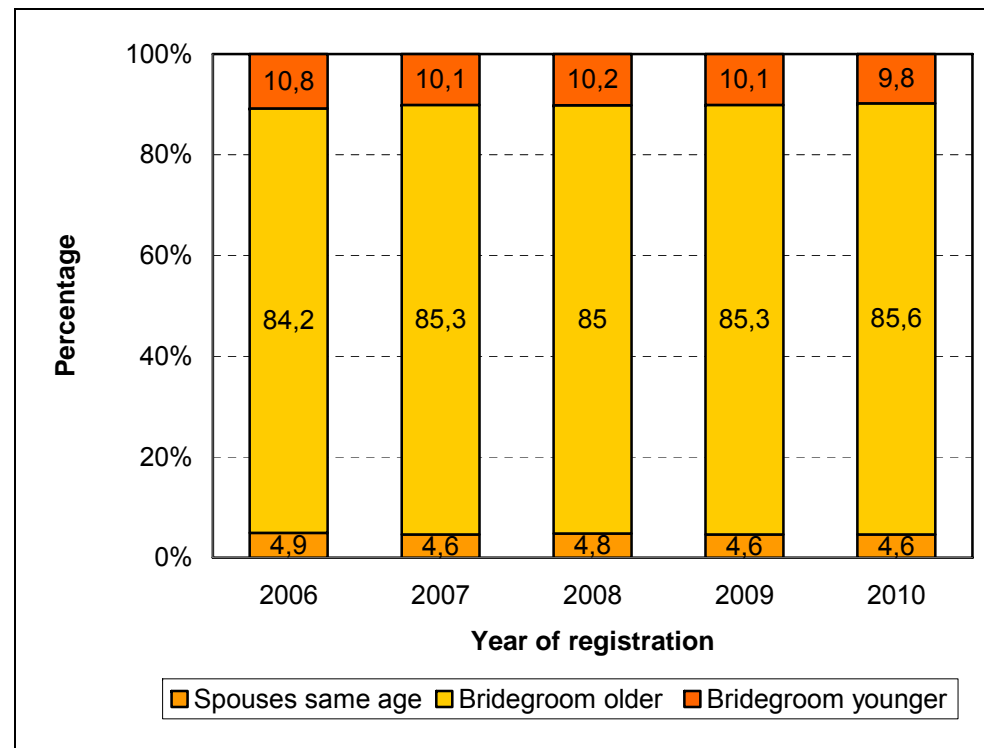


Figure 8. Median ages of spouses in civil unions at the time of union, 2007–2010

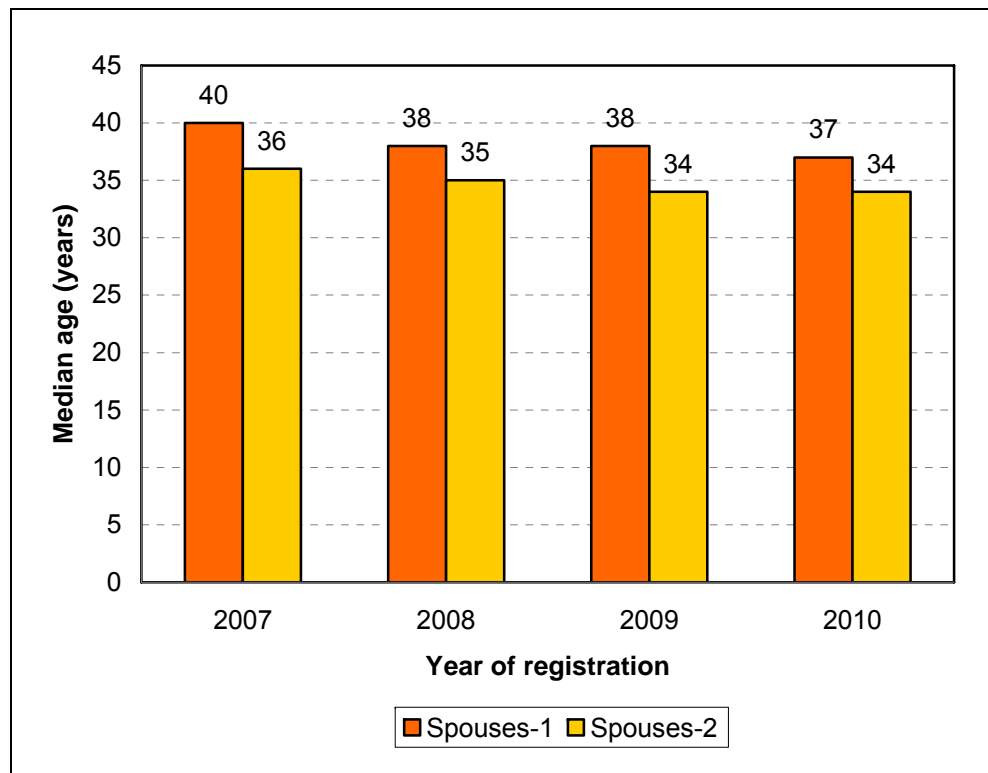


Figure 9. Percentage distribution of civil unions by age differences between spouses at the time of union, 2007–2010

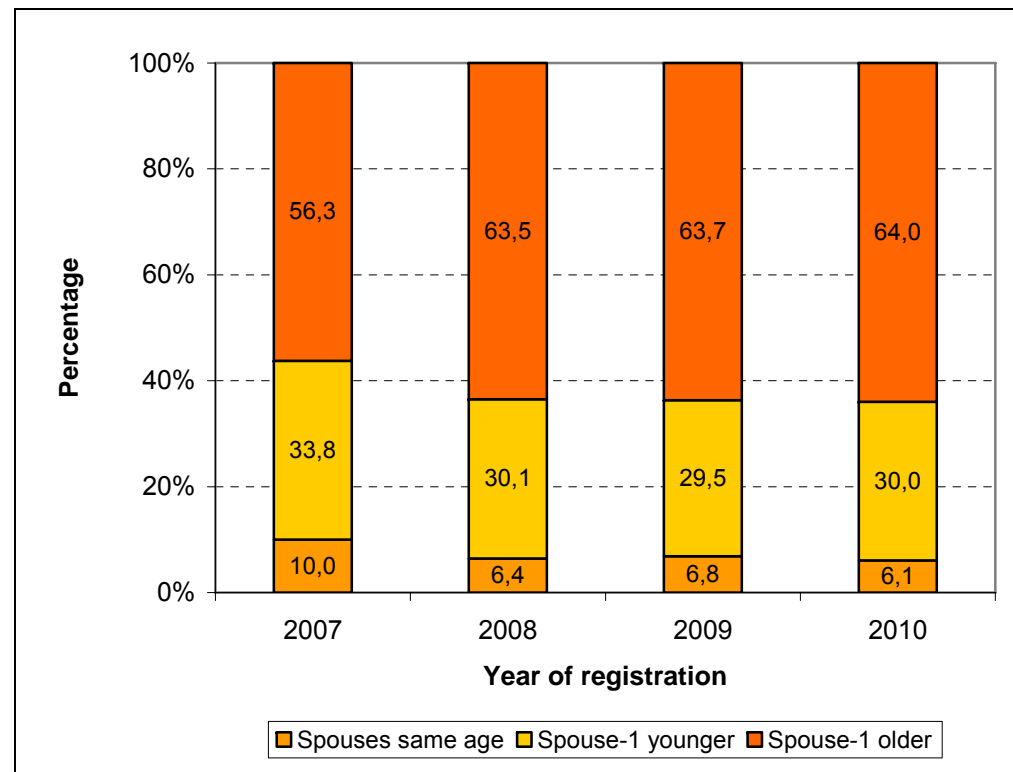


Figure 10. Median ages of divorcees at the time of divorce by sex and population group, 2010

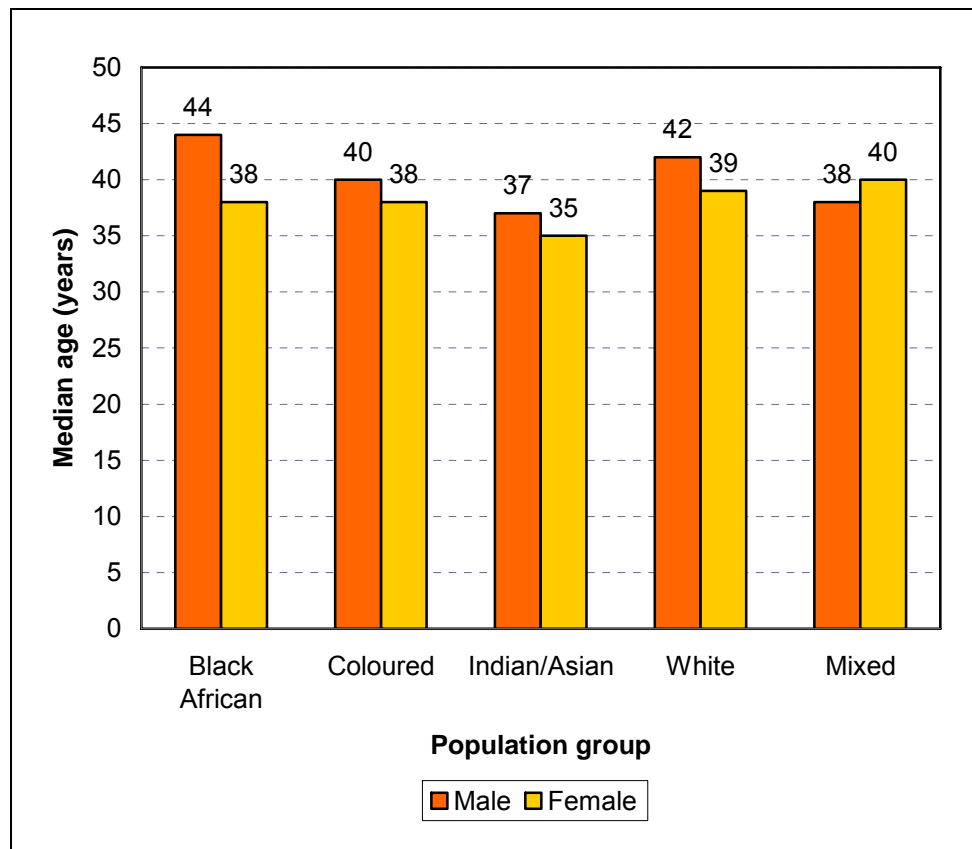


Figure 11. Number of divorces by age group and population group (males), 2010

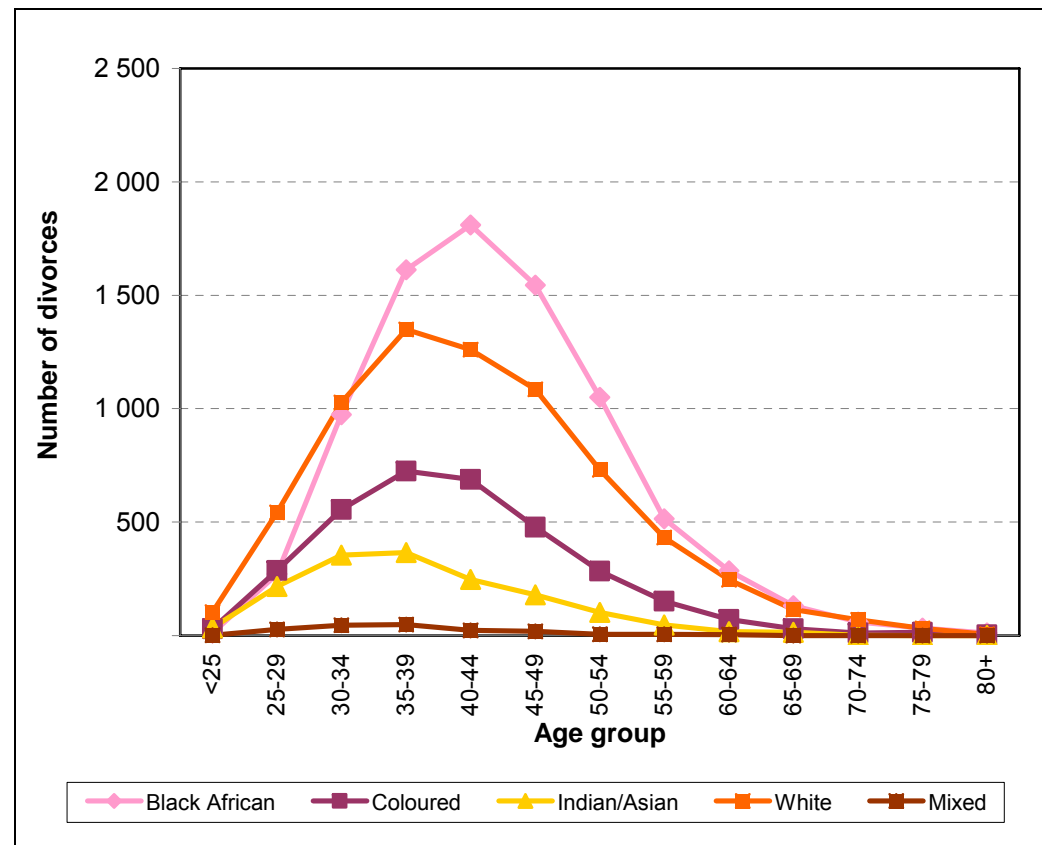


Figure 12. Number of divorces by age group and population group (females), 2010

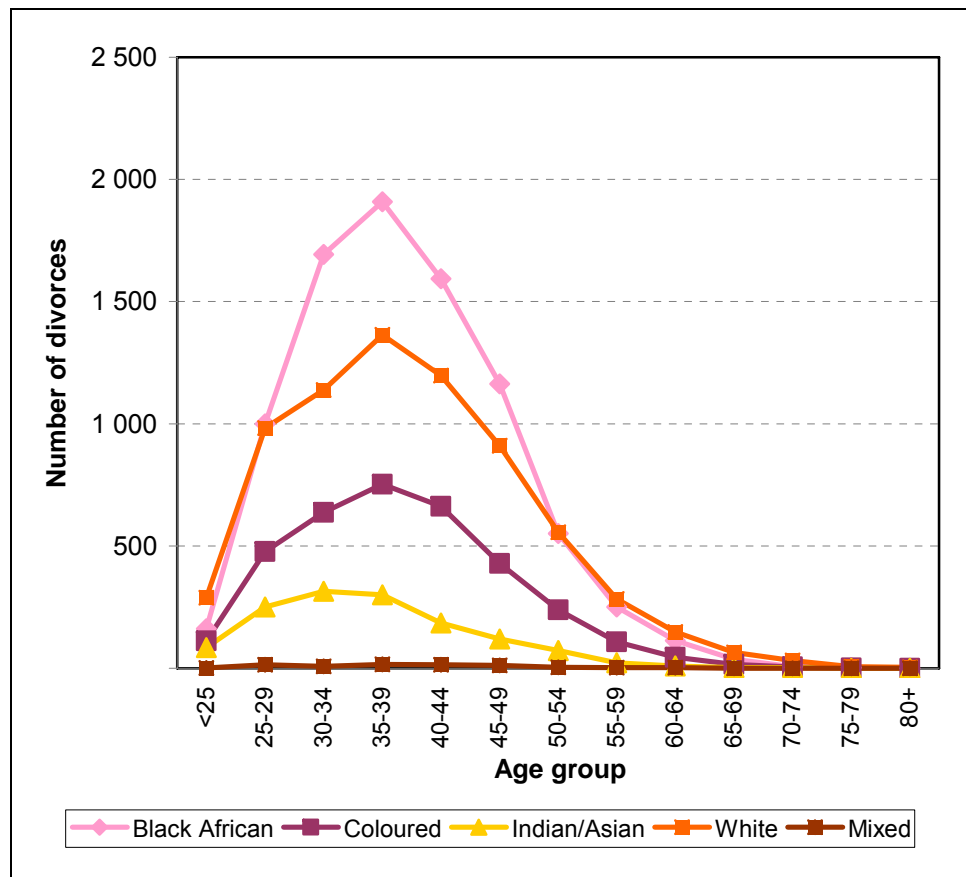


Figure 13. Number of divorces by duration of marriage and population group, 2010

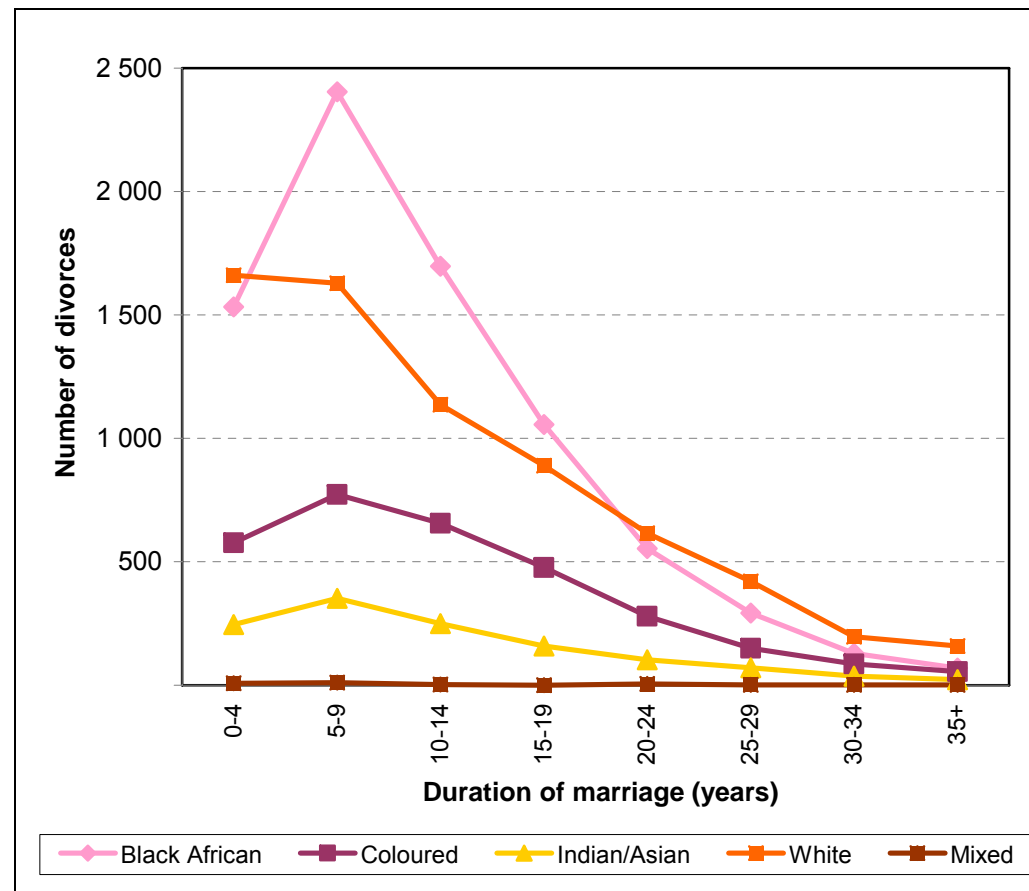


Table 1. Number of registered civil marriages in South Africa, 2001–2010

Year of registration	Number of marriages
2001	134 581
2002	177 202
2003	178 689
2004	176 521
2005	180 657
2006	184 860
2007	183 030
2008	186 522
2009	171 989
2010	170 826

Table 2. Number of civil marriages by way of solemnisation and province of marriage registration, 2010

Province of marriage registration	Total	Way of solemnisation		
		Religious	Civil	Unspecified
Grand Total	170 826	52 817	91 250	26 759
Western Cape	26 855	12 968	12 172	1 715
Eastern Cape	22 329	5 393	12 498	4 438
Northern Cape	4 552	1 645	1 462	1 445
Free State	11 905	4 091	7 496	318
KwaZulu-Natal	25 862	9 710	11 362	4 790
North West	13 193	2 922	9 205	1 066
Gauteng	41 396	11 381	21 779	8 236
Mpumalanga	8 809	1 727	4 463	2 619
Limpopo	9 699	1 177	7 204	1 318
Outside RSA	3 830	1 163	2 031	636
Unspecified	2 396	640	1 578	178

Table 3. Number of civil marriages for bridegrooms and brides by marital status at time of marriage and province of marriage registration, 2010

Province of marriage registration	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Bachelor	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	170 826	142 013	5 497	2 738	20 578	170 826	149 159	3 731	2 145	15 791
Western Cape	26 855	21 745	905	80	4 125	26 855	22 742	760	50	3 303
Eastern Cape	22 329	19 472	624	342	1 891	22 329	20 500	380	184	1 265
Northern Cape	4 552	3 768	199	41	544	4 552	3 991	138	45	378
Free State	11 905	10 085	423	164	1 233	11 905	10 563	275	216	851
KwaZulu-Natal	25 862	22 187	832	586	2 257	25 862	23 284	410	435	1 733
North West	13 193	11 052	471	176	1 494	13 193	11 802	298	114	979
Gauteng	41 396	32 883	1 316	717	6 480	41 396	34 356	1 006	625	5 409
Mpumalanga	8 809	7 298	290	198	1 023	8 809	7 634	210	163	802
Limpopo	9 699	8 402	245	286	766	9 699	8 990	103	168	438
Outside RSA	3 830	3 100	105	117	508	3 830	3 184	103	116	427
Unspecified	2 396	2 021	87	31	257	2 396	2 113	48	29	206

Table 4. Number of civil marriages by marital status of husband and age differences between spouses at the time of marriage, 2010*

Age difference	Grand Total	Bachelor to					Divorcee to				
		Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	170 826	142 013	133 738	1 235	1 599	5 441	5 497	3 124	1 031	78	1 264
Bridegroom older	133 685	110 026	105 655	621	1 273	2 477	4 798	2 871	822	63	1 042
Bridegroom younger	24 648	20 781	17 484	536	215	2 546	519	180	158	14	167
Same age	12 493	11 206	10 599	78	111	418	180	73	51	1	55

Age difference	Widower to				
	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	2 738	2 239	40	390	69
Bridegroom older	2 405	1 973	32	334	66
Bridegroom younger	221	180	5	33	3
Same age	112	86	3	23	-

*Excluding 20 578 marriages with unspecified marital status of bridegroom

Table 5. Number of marriages by marital status at the time of marriage and ages of bridegrooms and brides, 2010

Age	Bridegrooms' marital status at marriage					Brides marital status at marriage				
	Total	Bachelor	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	170 826	142 013	5 497	2 738	20 578	170 826	149 159	3 731	2 145	15 791
<18	13	12	-	-	1	289	277	1	9	2
18	30	29	-	1	-	628	596	3	23	6
19	156	152	-	2	2	1 426	1 384	3	31	8
18-19	186	181	-	3	2	2 054	1 980	6	54	14
20	415	405	2	6	2	2 346	2 261	3	60	22
21	842	823	-	10	9	3 750	3 615	5	97	33
22	1 587	1 559	-	24	4	5 299	5 137	11	114	37
23	2 567	2 518	2	35	12	7 214	7 025	11	109	69
24	3 980	3 899	3	59	19	8 629	8 410	9	121	89
20-24	9 391	9 204	7	134	46	27 238	26 448	39	501	250
25	5 619	5 527	3	53	36	10 141	9 876	9	126	130
26	6 790	6 644	5	76	65	10 642	10 307	22	108	205
27	7 904	7 713	11	93	87	10 886	10 494	30	99	263
28	8 463	8 227	11	74	151	10 289	9 805	44	94	346
29	8 420	8 111	13	85	211	9 094	8 588	43	66	397
25-29	37 196	36 222	43	381	550	51 052	49 070	148	493	1 341
30	8 600	8 255	10	75	260	8 621	8 081	40	71	429
31	8 236	7 830	24	59	323	7 767	7 245	55	43	424
32	7 662	7 182	31	54	395	6 704	6 092	49	32	531
33	7 562	6 982	46	43	491	6 366	5 659	62	40	605
34	7 183	6 542	57	35	549	5 837	5 152	82	28	575
30-34	39 243	36 791	168	266	2 018	35 295	32 229	288	214	2 564

Table 5. Number of marriages by marital status at the time of marriage and ages of bridegrooms and brides, 2010 (continued)

Age	Bridegrooms' marital status at marriage					Brides' marital status at marriage				
	Total	Bachelor	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
35	7 049	6 281	93	33	642	5 527	4 768	80	22	657
36	6 740	5 913	81	22	724	5 124	4 316	94	17	697
37	6 058	5 168	75	25	790	4 359	3 556	103	17	683
38	6 072	5 031	136	16	889	4 235	3 381	119	20	715
39	4 643	3 669	123	24	827	3 140	2 342	96	19	683
35-39	30 562	26 062	508	120	3 872	22 385	18 363	492	95	3 435
40	5 105	4 002	164	13	926	3 406	2 531	132	11	732
41	4 341	3 268	156	24	893	2 933	2 112	108	16	697
42	4 173	3 011	178	48	936	2 779	1 994	117	15	653
43	3 429	2 353	152	67	857	2 170	1 430	108	25	607
44	3 135	2 128	163	76	768	2 188	1 487	116	28	557
40-44	20 183	14 762	813	228	4 380	13 476	9 554	581	95	3 246
45	3 052	1 945	167	109	831	2 031	1 364	106	31	530
46	2 812	1 731	162	107	812	1 846	1 184	128	39	495
47	2 669	1 564	161	128	816	1 680	1 047	115	49	469
48	2 439	1 391	173	102	773	1 555	952	121	51	431
49	1 958	1 044	164	91	659	1 268	707	109	40	412
45-49	12 930	7 675	827	537	3 891	8 380	5 254	579	210	2 337
50	2 115	1 167	155	117	676	1 369	783	129	53	404
51	1 739	902	140	98	599	1 070	607	109	53	301
52	1 744	937	170	95	542	1 015	584	101	43	287
53	1 458	778	127	67	486	843	462	104	40	237
54	1 375	666	147	87	475	736	425	83	36	192
50-54	8 431	4 450	739	464	2 778	5 033	2 861	526	225	1 421

Table 5. Number of marriages by marital status at the time of marriage and ages of bridegrooms and brides, 2010 (concluded)

Age	Bridegrooms' marital status at marriage					Brides'				
	Total	Bachelor	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
55	1 123	547	141	62	373	659	361	89	35	174
56	1 193	611	156	48	378	593	329	85	34	145
57	999	514	130	47	308	509	261	81	37	130
58	1 100	593	142	76	289	527	308	71	23	125
59	779	385	125	36	233	343	201	55	17	70
55-59	5 194	2 650	694	269	1 581	2 631	1 460	381	146	644
60	955	526	137	71	221	517	315	83	27	92
61	805	444	126	39	196	320	160	59	19	82
62	662	367	96	47	152	242	141	41	11	49
63	620	315	118	40	147	241	117	50	9	65
64	486	244	111	22	109	192	108	45	10	29
60-64	3 528	1 896	588	219	825	1 512	841	278	76	317
65	429	212	100	27	90	210	101	66	6	37
66	375	188	87	18	82	165	88	35	4	38
67	342	168	89	12	73	137	67	41	4	25
68	379	194	102	20	63	145	74	48	4	19
69	273	122	83	8	60	107	53	30		24
65-69	1 798	884	461	85	368	764	383	220	18	143
70+	2 171	1 224	649	32	266	717	439	192	9	77

Table 6. Number of registered customary marriages in South Africa, 2003–2010

Year of registration	Number of marriages
2003	17 283
2004	20 301
2005	19 252
2006	14 039
2007	20 259
2008	16 003
2009	13 506
2010	9 996

Table 7. Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2010

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
Total	9 996	9 996
<18	57	758
18	41	453
19	90	514
18-19	131	967
20	197	606
21	249	551
22	350	536
23	377	502
24	441	500
20-24	1 614	2 695
25	454	504
26	473	464
27	463	423
28	490	406
29	449	388
25-29	2 329	2 185
30	439	347
31	392	321
32	389	318
33	364	248
34	326	256
30-34	1 910	1 490

Table 7. Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2010 (continued)

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
35	351	198
36	307	202
37	269	170
38	295	156
39	239	161
35-39	1 461	887
40	267	128
41	205	107
42	202	90
43	180	84
44	151	80
40-44	1 005	489
45	129	70
46	128	55
47	133	55
48	136	39
49	109	37
45-49	635	256
50	92	38
51	75	29
52	85	27
53	58	17
54	48	17
50-54	358	128

Table 7. Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2010 (concluded)

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
55	42	12
56	35	17
57	56	11
58	37	13
59	39	10
55-59	209	63
60	33	13
61	26	2
62	28	7
63	26	6
64	19	6
60-64	132	34
65	18	3
66	26	3
67	14	5
68	9	5
69	15	6
65-95	82	22
70+	68	14
Unspecified	5	8

Table 8. Number of registered civil unions in South Africa by province of registration, 2007–2010

Province of registration	2007	2008	2009	2010
Grand Total	80	732	760	888
Western Cape	16	191	227	261
Eastern Cape	-	41	30	24
Northern Cape	1	11	43	75
Free State	1	23	20	26
KwaZulu-Natal	8	74	87	79
North West	2	6	5	9
Gauteng	49	362	324	391
Mpumalanga	3	7	11	11
Limpopo	-	15	10	10
Outside RSA	-	2	3	2

Table 9. Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of solemnisation of civil union, 2010

Age	Spouses-1	Spouses-2
Total	888	888
18	-	3
19	-	9
18-19	-	12
20	5	7
21	3	15
22	11	22
23	15	23
24	19	30
20-24	53	97
25	25	32
26	21	34
27	25	31
28	27	46
29	32	29
25-29	130	172
30	37	49
31	28	36
32	45	25
33	40	34
34	28	43
30-34	178	187

Table 9. Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2010 (continued)

Age	Spouses-1	Spouses-2
35	36	33
36	35	27
37	40	32
38	38	28
39	40	28
35-39	189	148
40	31	24
41	20	23
42	27	19
43	21	28
44	25	22
40-44	124	116
45	23	19
46	19	16
47	17	18
48	16	9
49	17	14
45-49	92	76
50	11	7
51	13	8
52	8	6
53	6	5
54	6	6
50-54	44	32

Table 9. Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2010 (concluded)

Age	Spouses-1	Spouses-2
55	10	5
56	7	6
57	5	1
58	9	6
59	5	3
55-59	36	21
60	5	3
61	4	4
62	7	4
63	3	3
64	1	-
60-64	20	14
65	2	-
66	5	2
67	-	1
68	2	2
69	1	-
65-69	10	5
70+	12	8

Table 10. Number of published divorces in South Africa by population group, 2001–2010

Year	Total	Numbers						Percentages					
		Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified
2001	34 045	7 860	3 872	1 672	14 718	470	5 453	23,1	11,4	4,9	43,2	1,4	16,0
2002	31 370	7 050	3 581	1 525	14 171	365	4 678	22,5	11,4	4,9	45,2	1,2	14,8
2003	31 566	7 657	3 911	1 508	12 639	532	5 319	24,3	12,4	4,8	40,0	1,7	17,2
2004	31 768	8 965	3 300	1 648	12 437	594	4 824	28,2	10,4	5,2	39,1	1,9	15,2
2005	32 484	8 672	3 568	1 635	11 582	538	6 489	26,7	11,0	5,0	35,7	1,7	19,9
2006	31 270	9 113	3 451	1 676	11 079	613	5 338	29,1	11,0	5,4	35,4	2,0	17,1
2007	29 639	9 055	3 558	1 715	9 935	865	4 511	30,6	12,0	5,8	33,5	2,9	15,0
2008	28 924	10 110	3 057	1 802	9 481	902	3 572	35,0	10,6	6,2	32,8	3,1	12,3
2009	30 763	10 528	4 016	1 610	9 981	2 912	1 716	34,2	13,1	5,2	32,4	9,5	5,6
2010	22 936	8 169	3 189	1 294	6 995	31	3 258	35,6	13,9	5,6	30,5	0,1	14,2

Table 11. Number of divorces by sex and population group of the plaintiff, 2010

Population group	Total	Male	Female	Unspecified
Total	22 936	7 999	11 309	3 628
Black African	8 169	3 182	3 224	1 763
Coloured	3 189	940	1 747	502
Indian/Asian	1 294	435	690	169
White	6 995	2 189	4 027	779
Mixed	31	13	13	5
Unspecified	3 258	1 240	1 608	410

Table 12. Number of divorces by sex and type of occupation of the plaintiff, 2010

Type of occupation	Total	Male	Female	Unspecified
Total	22 936	7 999	11 309	3 628
Professional, Semi-Professional and Technical Occupations	1 734	613	1 121	-
Managers and Administrators	2 201	1 165	1 036	-
Clerical and Sale Occupations	2 764	615	2 149	-
Transport, Delivery and Communications	358	329	29	-
Service Occupations	1 644	784	860	-
Farming and Related Occupations	62	56	6	-
Artisans, Apprentice and Related Occupations	765	586	179	-
Production Foreman, Mine and Quarry Worker	685	503	182	-
Not Economically Active	3 460	1 114	2 346	-
Unspecified	9 263	2 234	3 401	3 628

Table 13. Number of divorces by population group and way of solemnisation of the marriage, 2010

Population group	Total	Religious	Civil	Unspecified
Total	22 936	11 063	9 387	2 486
Black African	8 169	2 489	5 118	562
Coloured	3 189	2 038	912	239
Indian/Asian	1 294	355	722	217
White	6 995	4 974	1 206	815
Mixed	31	9	18	4
Unspecified	3 258	1 198	1 411	649

Table 14. Number of divorces by number of times married at the time of divorce, 2010

Number of times married	Male	Female
Total	22 936	22 936
Once	18 114	18 245
Twice	2 406	2 081
Three or more times	408	358
Unspecified	2 008	2 252

Table 15. Number of divorces by age group and population group (males), 2010

Age group	Population group						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified
Total	22 936	8 659	3 397	1 646	7 216	225	1 793
<25	188	11	29	34	103	2	9
25-29	1 428	271	287	216	543	27	84
30-34	3 183	974	556	355	1 028	45	225
35-39	4 393	1 612	725	366	1 349	48	293
40-44	4 307	1 810	688	247	1 260	22	280
45-49	3 523	1 545	477	179	1 086	18	218
50-54	2 350	1 050	284	102	730	6	178
55-59	1 258	515	151	47	432	6	107
60-64	674	286	71	17	246	4	50
65-69	308	131	29	14	114	-	20
70-74	149	59	12	1	69	-	8
75-79	84	32	14	-	31	-	7
80+	23	12	3	-	6	-	2
Unspecified	1 068	351	71	68	219	47	312

Table 16. Number of divorces by age group and population group (females), 2010

Age group	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified
Total	22 936	8 813	3 567	1 395	7 181	81	1 899
<25	687	161	112	84	289	1	40
25-29	2 905	1 000	477	251	983	15	179
30-34	4 061	1 693	638	315	1 138	8	269
35-39	4 682	1 908	753	300	1 364	16	341
40-44	3 934	1 593	662	185	1 198	14	282
45-49	2 850	1 164	429	119	910	12	216
50-54	1 549	551	239	72	556	4	127
55-59	750	251	108	22	283	3	83
60-64	345	113	45	9	148	2	28
65-69	128	37	16	3	64	-	8
70-74	48	6	5	2	31	-	4
75-79	14	3	1	-	6	-	4
80+	4	-	-	-	4	-	-
Unspecified	979	333	82	33	207	6	318

Table 17. Number of divorces by duration of marriage and age group (males), 2010

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	22 936	4 732	6 216	4 267	2 906	1 772	1 063	515	354	1 111
<25	188	173	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
25-29	1 428	896	448	11	-	-	-	-	-	73
30-34	3 183	1 121	1 534	398	11	1	-	-	-	118
35-39	4 393	926	1 631	1 235	413	16	-	-	-	172
40-44	4 307	538	1 053	1 118	1 019	379	21	-	-	179
45-49	3 523	393	607	652	722	688	295	10	-	156
50-54	2 350	229	312	354	368	361	423	192	3	108
55-59	1 258	118	171	169	156	138	169	188	84	65
60-64	674	66	109	88	62	64	63	65	123	34
65-69	308	28	36	48	27	26	34	14	70	25
70-74	149	31	20	17	15	8	6	13	27	12
75-79	84	16	15	15	5	9	7	3	9	5
80+	23	3	3	5	2	4	2	1	1	2
Unspecified	1 068	194	270	157	106	78	43	29	37	154

Table 18. Number of divorces by duration of marriage and age group (females), 2010

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	22 936	4 732	6 216	4 267	2 906	1 772	1 063	515	354	1 111
<25	687	549	99	-	-	-	-	-	-	39
25-29	2 905	1 390	1 264	126	1	-	-	-	-	124
30-34	4 061	1 003	1 859	915	117	1	-	-	-	166
35-39	4 682	692	1 348	1 464	869	123	1	-	-	185
40-44	3 934	422	674	880	1 000	693	101	-	-	164
45-49	2 850	275	409	419	527	548	463	71	-	138
50-54	1 549	108	195	194	189	201	307	249	30	76
55-59	750	76	87	77	65	78	86	111	128	42
60-64	345	36	28	40	23	24	35	38	106	15
65-69	128	16	16	15	11	9	5	13	34	9
70-74	48	7	4	7	2	6	6	1	10	5
75-79	14	1	4	3	-	3	1	-	2	-
80+	4	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unspecified	979	155	227	127	102	86	58	32	44	148

Table 19. Number of divorces including couples with and without children by population group, 2010

Population group	Total divorces	Divorces without children	Divorces with children	Unspecified
Total	22 936	10 448	12 486	2
African	8 169	3 430	4 738	1
Coloured	3 189	1 119	2 070	-
Indian/Asian	1 294	577	717	-
White	6 995	3 496	3 499	-
Mixed	31	19	12	-
Unspecified	3 258	1 807	1 450	1

Table 20. Number and percentage distribution of children involved in divorces, 2010

Population group	Total number of children involved	Percentage
Total	20 383	100,0
African	7 719	37,9
Coloured	3 529	17,3
Indian/Asian	1 113	5,5
White	5 633	27,6
Mixed	17	0,1
Unspecified	2 372	11,6

EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. Purpose of the statistical release

The purpose of the statistical release is to provide statistical data through the analysis of registered marriages and divorces that provide information on the formation and dissolution of marriage relationships and civil unions recognised by the South Africa legal systems. The legal recognition, benefits and protection of marriages and divorces by the legal system cannot be overemphasized. Therefore data from this release provide information on the extent to which individuals are making use of such national provisions. In addition is the social importance of data on children that are likely to be adversely affected by divorce since the duration of marriage is generally less than ten years and is likely to involve young children

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 civil marriages that have been granted. Undocumented cases of abandonment, divorces that have been granted by religious or traditional authorities are not reported in the release. Divorce data from registered customary marriages and civil unions will be reported when sufficient data become available.

3. Data

Stats SA downloads the data on civil marriage, customary marriages and civil unions from the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) through State Information Technology Agency (SITA). The data are processed and analysed for publication.

Data on divorces are collected from the divorce courts using a standard structured form prepared by Stats SA. The forms are regularly completed by the courts as divorce decrees are given. They are consolidated and mailed to Stats SA head office. At Stats SA the forms are sorted and captured according to court and calendar month; processed, analysed and published.

4. Limitations

The release focuses on presenting the demographic characteristics of the married and divorced persons. The information does not cover other important issues such as the causes and impact of divorce.

The marriages and divorces data are not correlated. They are marriages and divorces registered in 2010. However, the divorces come from marriages that were registered in different years.

5. Definitions of terms

Civil marriages: these are marriages registered according the Marriage Act, 1961. In the release the term 'civil' is used to differentiate marriages that were solemnised by licensed lay 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 exist in South Africa (see Recognition of Customary Marriages act,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.

Mixed population group: refers to couples with different racial backgrounds.

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

6. Symbols

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

GENERAL INFORMATION

Marriages and divorces, 2010

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