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IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH DATA ECOSYSTEMS



PREFACE

This statistical release presents information on civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions that were registered in 2019 in the South African national marriage registration systems 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 2019 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Risenga Maluleke', with a stylized, cursive script.

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 that 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 2019. The 2019 mid-year population estimates [(*Mid-year population estimates, 2019* (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 2019. 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 (2010 – 2019)

Information provided in Table 1, on page 21, shows that 129 597 civil marriages of South African citizens and permanent residents were registered at the Department of Home Affairs in 2019. Table 1 further shows that the number of registered marriages consistently declined in the ten-year period (2010 to 2019), except for a slight increase of 0,6% between 2015 and 2016. During the period 2010 to 2019, the highest number of marriages was recorded in 2010 (170 826) and the lowest number in 2019 (129 597). The 2019 figure of 129 597 civil marriages shows a decrease of 1,3% from the 131 240 marriages recorded in 2018.

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. The results show that solemnisation of marriages has a second peak in March or April, depending on the month of the Easter holiday for that particular year. In 2019, the highest number of marriages [15 187 (11,7%)] took place in December and the lowest number of marriages, [8 364 (6,5%)] occurred in January. Peaks seem to be linked to the school calendar for long holidays, which allows many people to travel and participate in marriage celebrations.

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 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 2019 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, 75 519 (58,3%) of the 129 597 marriages were solemnised by DHA marriage officers and 40 657 (31,4%) by 'Religious' rites. The type of solemnisation rite was not specified in 13 421 (10,4%) marriages. Table 2 further shows that 557 (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 2019, the observed crude civil marriage rate was 220 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 2019, the highest number of marriages was registered in Gauteng [32 352 (25,0%)] and the lowest in Northern Cape [3 692 (2,8%)]. Looking at ways of marriage solemnisation within each province, Free State had the highest proportion of marriages, 80,2% (6 977) solemnised by civil marriage officers. Western Cape recorded the highest proportion, 48,1% (8 065) of marriages solemnised by religious marriage officers. Wide differences of 'unspecified' way of solemnisation by province were noted. For example, 41,3% (2 932) of marriages in Mpumalanga had 'unspecified' method of solemnisation compared with 0,6% (23) in Northern Cape.

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 2019 for both bridegrooms and brides were first-time marriages in all provinces. For bridegrooms, there were 105 163 (81,1%) never married men, 4 852 (3,7%) divorcees and 918 (0,7%) widowers. For the brides, there were 111 464 (86,0%) never married women whilst 3 328 (2,6%) were divorcees and 622 (0,5%) were widows. The marital status of 18 664 (14,4%) bridegrooms and 14 183 (10,9%) brides were unspecified. A high proportion of marriages between bridegrooms and brides marrying for the first time was observed in Limpopo contributing 8 629 (85,6%) and 9 243 (91,7%) respectively. The profile of those that were remarrying showed that remarriages were more prevalent in divorcees compared to the widowed, 4 852 (3,7%) bridegroom divorcees compared to 918 (0,7%) widowers and 3 328 (2,6%) bride divorcees compared to 622 (0,5%) 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 98 779 (93,9%) of never married men wedded never married women, 1 225 (1,2%) married divorcees and 435 (0,4%) 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, 800 (16,5%) was higher than the proportion that married widows, 47 (1,0%). Similarly, the proportion of widowers who married widows, 118 (12,9%) was higher than the proportion that married female divorcees, 30 (3,3%).

Table 4 also suggests that men tend to marry younger women, as 98 714 (76,2%) of the 129 597 bridegrooms were older than their brides. However, 20 730 (16,0%) bridegrooms were younger than their brides and 10 151 (7,8%) 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, 43,8% of never married men who married divorcees were younger than their brides (see Figure 2a) and 10,6% of male divorcees who married widowed women were also younger than their brides (see Figure 2c). A relatively smaller percentage (5,3%) 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 2019, marriages of 3 bridegrooms and 68 brides aged less than 18 years were registered, with 60 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 [26 595 (20,5%)] were aged 30–34 years whereas the highest number of never married women [30 699 (23,7%)] 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), see Figure 4b on page 13. Figure 4a on page 13 shows the median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage. Median ages

at marriage in 2019 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 2015 to 37 years in 2019 and that of brides increased from 31 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 2019, showing an age difference of three years (see Figure 4b). For remarriages, the median age for widowers and widows in 2019 (see Figure 4c) were 57 years and 34 years respectively, resulting in a 23-year age gap. The median age for widowers consistently increased from 52 years in 2015 to 57 years in 2019. The median age of widows fluctuated between 30 years and 34 years during 2015 and 2019.

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 2015 to 57 years in 2019 whereas the median age of female divorcee ranged between 48 years in 2015 and 50 years in 2019. There was a seven-year age difference in the median ages between male and female divorcees who married in 2019.

2.2 Customary marriages

2.2.1 Trends in the registration of customary marriages (2010–2019)

In 2019, 2 789 customary marriages were registered at the Department of Home Affairs, indicating a decrease of 11,7% from 3 160 customary marriages registered in 2018. It is observed from Table 6 on page 28 that the number of registered customary marriages fluctuated between 2010 and 2019. The highest number of registered customary marriages was recorded in 2010 (9 996) whilst the lowest number was recorded in 2017 (2 588). The observed crude customary marriage rate was 5 per 100 000 estimated resident population in 2019².

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 2019, about 18,3% 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 2019, about 1 163 (41,7%) of the registered customary marriages were from KwaZulu-Natal followed by Limpopo with 634 (22,7%) and Mpumalanga 323 (11,6%). The other six (6) 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 2019, there were 9 (0,3%) bridegrooms and 121 (4,3%) brides who were younger than 18 years. Table 8 further indicate that a higher number of bridegrooms 512 (18,4%) where aged 30–34 years and brides were predominant at ages 20–24 years, 545 (19,5%).

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 five to 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 2015 and 2019. The median ages of both bridegrooms and brides fluctuated over the period 2015 and 2019. The median age of bridegrooms fluctuated between 34 years and 36 years whereas that of bride fluctuated 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 2019, 86,1% of bridegrooms were older than their brides whilst 8,8% were younger than their brides, and 5,0% 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 (2015–2019)

Table 9 on page 33 shows that in 2019, 1 771 civil unions were registered (including the registration of six civil unions of South African citizens and permanent residents solemnised outside South Africa). In 2019, the crude civil union rate was 3 per 100 000 estimated resident population³. In general, the number of civil unions registered in South Africa increased over the five-year period. Civil unions registered increased by 7,3% from 1 650 in 2018 to 1 771 in 2019. The provincial distribution of civil unions registered in 2019 indicates that Gauteng 779 (44,0%) and Western Cape 443 (25,0%) were the provinces with the highest number of registrations of civil unions. In total, 69,0% of civil unions in 2019 were registered in these two provinces. The lowest number of registered civil unions was recorded in Northern Cape 18 (1,0%) and Limpopo 23 (1,3%).

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 and spouses-2 were aged 30–34 with [427 (24,1%)] and [443 (25,0%)] respectively.

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 and spouses-2 remained the same at 36 years and 34 years respectively as compared to 2018. 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 2019, 60,7% of spouses-1 were older than their spouses, whilst 30,6% were younger than their spouses and 8,7% 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 (2010 – 2019)

The 2019 divorce data reported in this statistical release is based on 23 710 completed divorce forms that Stats SA received and processed. The number (23 710) indicates a decrease of 1 574 (6,2%) divorces from the 25 284 cases processed in 2018 (see Table 11 on page 37). The table shows that the total number of divorces decreased from 2010 to 2011 followed by a consistent increase in the years 2012 to 2017 and a slight decrease of 0,4% between 2017 and 2018. In 2019, about 174 divorces were granted for same-sex couples. The observed crude divorce rate was 40 divorces per 100 000 estimated resident population in 2019⁴.

Table 11 also provides data on divorces classified by population group and the year in which the divorce was granted. In 2019, 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 (2010 to 2019). About 10 677 (45,0%) of the 23 710 divorces granted in 2019 were from black African population group followed by white 5 268 (22,2%), coloured 4 502 (19,0%), India/Asian 1 299 (5,5%) and divorces from different population groups (mixed) 816 (3,4%). The population group of 1 148 couples was not specified.

Figure 14 on page 20 demonstrates the number of divorces and crude divorce rate by population group. In 2019, most divorces were filed by the black African population group 10 677 (45,0%) followed by the white population group 5 268 (22,2%), coloured population group 4 502 (19,0%) and then the Indian/Asian population group 1 299 (5,5%). The crude divorce rates by population groups show that the white population group had the highest rate of 112 per 100 000 estimated resident population followed by the coloured and Indian/Asian population groups with 87 and 85 per 100 000 respectively. The black African population had 23 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 (26,5%) and wives (29,7%) did not specify the type of occupation they were engaged in at the time of divorce. In addition, 17,4% and 24,3% of husbands and wives respectively were not economically active at the time of divorce. Most male divorcees were employed in services occupations 3 360 (14,2%) while female divorcees were largely in professional, semi-professional and technical occupations 3 327 (14,0%).

3.2 Characteristics of plaintiffs

The 2019 data presented in Table 13 on page 39 show that more wives than husbands, 12 615 (53,2%) women compared to 8 210 (34,6%) men initiated divorce proceedings. The sex of the plaintiff was not specified in 2 885 (12,2%) cases. With the exception of women from the black African population group who had a lower proportion of plaintiffs (48,9%), the proportion of women plaintiffs from the other population groups was above 50,0%. The plaintiffs for the interracial couples show that 53,6% of the divorces were filed by wives. The proportion of women plaintiffs for the white population group, coloured population group and Indian/Asian population group were 58,3%, 57,9% and 57,2% respectively.

Table 14 on page 39 provides information on the province and sex of the plaintiff. The provincial distribution indicates that Gauteng (6 318), Western Cape (6 108), KwaZulu-Natal (4 033) and Eastern Cape (3 137) were the provinces with the highest number of divorces granted. Together the four provinces contributed 82,6% of the divorces granted in 2019. 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 10 876 (45,9%) of the 2019 divorce cases were from marriages that were solemnised by religious rites and 10 581 (44,6%) by civil rites. About 68,8% of divorces from the white population group and 66,0% 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, 66,0% and 52,5% respectively.

3.4 Number of times married

Results presented in Table 16 on page 40 show that the 2019 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 11,8% of men and 10,1% of women from second-time marriages. Less than 1,5% of men and women were getting divorced for at least the third time.

3.5 Age at the time of divorce

The median age at the time of divorce in 2019 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 2019 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 two to 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 later, mostly at 35-39 years for black African males than for other population groups where they start mostly from 30-34 years. For males, the peak age group for black African, coloured and Indian/Asian population groups was 40 to 44 years whereas the peak for 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 and white population groups and the peak age group at divorce was 40 to 44 years for Indian/Asian population group (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 2019. Table 19 and Table 20 show that the largest number [6 225 (26,3%)] 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 [4 964 (20,9%)] and marriages that lasted for less than five years [3 996 (16,9%)]. Results showed that four in ten divorces 10 221 (43,1%) of the 23 710 in 2019 were marriages that lasted for less than 10 years.

According to results given in Figure 13 on page 19, irrespective of the population group, the highest proportion of divorces occurred to couples who had been married between five and nine years. Population group variations showed that 28,6% of divorces from the black African; 25,1% from coloured, 23,9% from white and 21,0% from Indian/Asian population groups were from marriages that lasted between five and nine years. The white population had the highest proportion (21,0%) 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 between ages 15 and 34 years.

3.7 Divorces involving couples with children less than 18 years

In 2019, 13 264 (55,9%) of the 23 710 divorces had children younger than 18 years whereas 10 446 (44,1%) 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 (55,9%). Looking at the black African and coloured and divorcees, divorces involving couples with children constituted about 60,9% and 63,0% respectively. Table 22 on page 45 shows that 49,6% of children affected by divorce were from the black African population group; 21,8% from the coloured population group; 17,0% from the white population group and 4,8% 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 2019, 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, 129 597 civil marriages were registered in South Africa in 2019, with more than half 75 519 (58,3%) being solemnised by DHA marriage officers. The highest number of civil marriages was registered in Gauteng (32 352), followed by KwaZulu-Natal (21 753) and Western Cape (16 783), and the lowest was registered in Northern Cape (3 692). The majority of civil marriages in 2019 for both bridegrooms (105 163) and brides (111 464) were first time marriages, with women generally entering into marriage at younger ages than men do.

The number of registered customary marriages was 2 789 in 2019, which decreased by 11,7% from a total of 3 160 recorded in 2018. The majority of bridegrooms [2 401 (86,1%)] 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 2019 was 1 771, most of which were registered in Gauteng (779) and Western Cape (443), and lowest in Limpopo (23) and Northern Cape (18).

With regard to divorces, the data showed that 23 710 divorces were granted in 2019. 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 (6 318), Western Cape (6 108), KwaZulu-Natal (4 033) and Eastern Cape (3 137) were the provinces with the highest number of divorces granted. In 2019, about 22 084 children aged less than 18 years were affected by divorces that took place.

Overall, the information provided in this release showed fluctuations over time in the number of marriages and divorces and an increasing trend on civil unions 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 the divorcees.

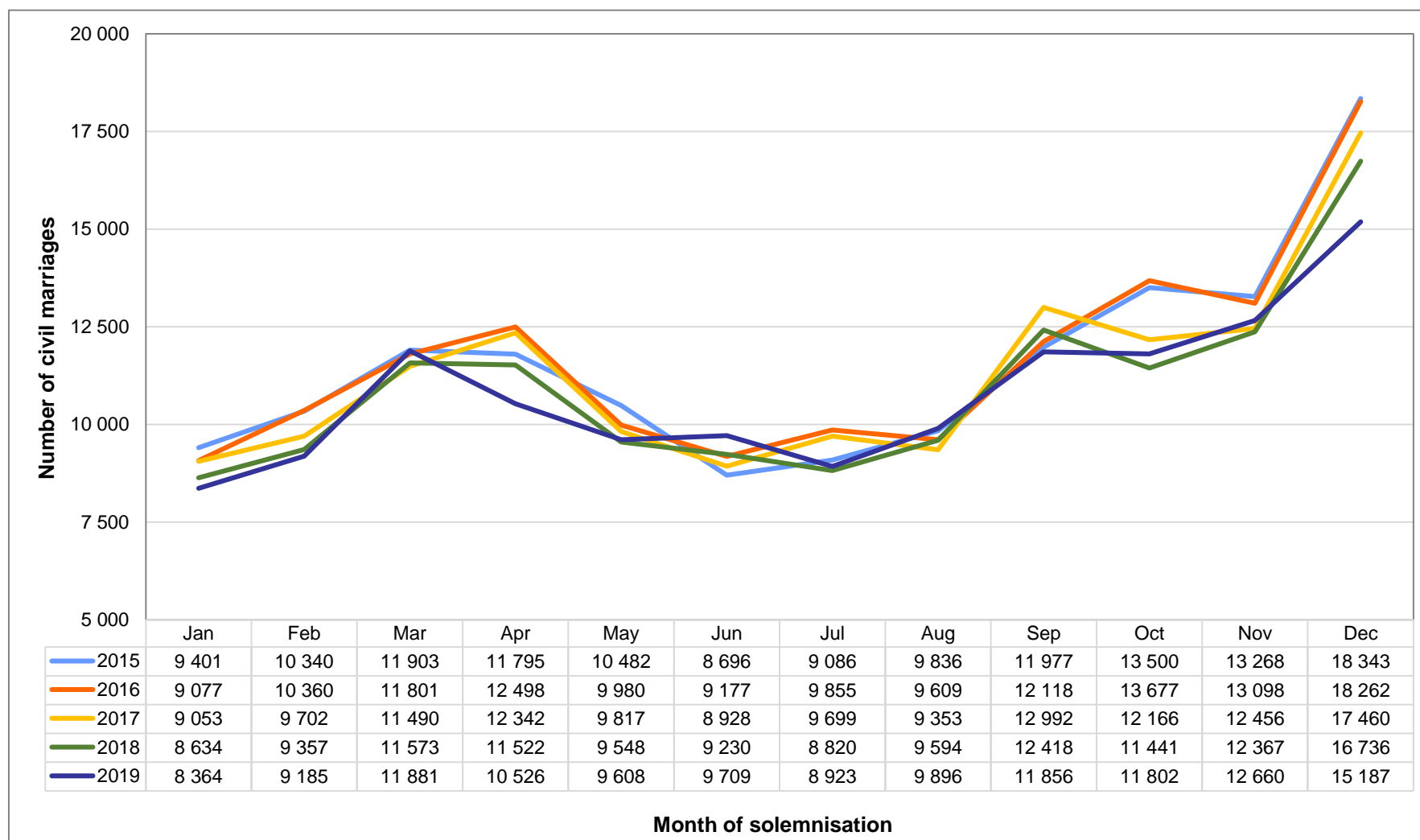
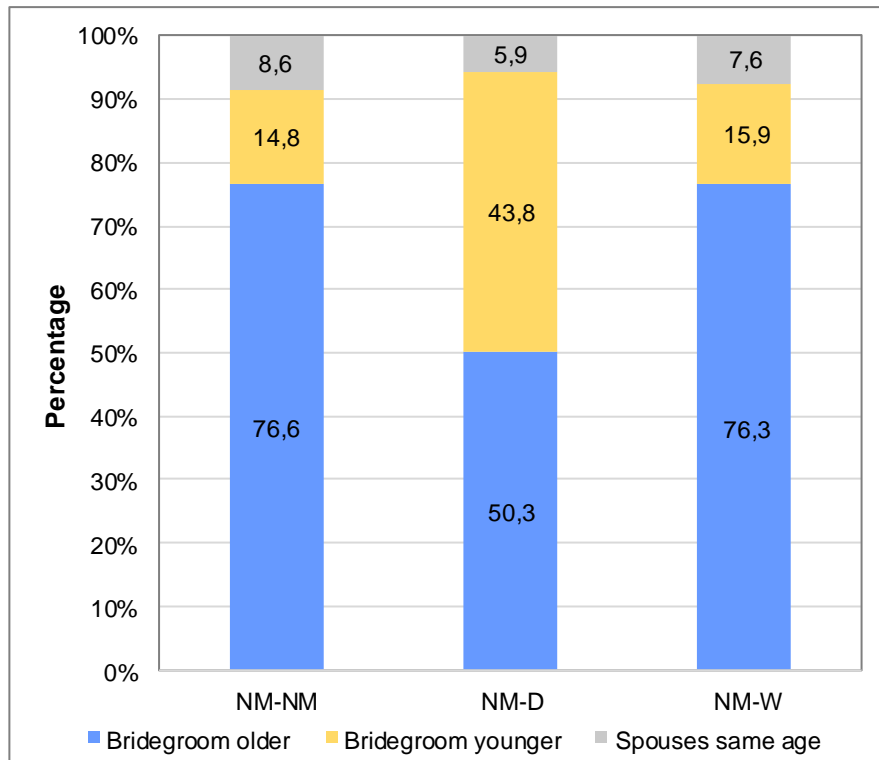
Figure 1 – Number of civil marriages by month of solemnisation, 2015 – 2019

Figure 2a – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (never married men), 2019



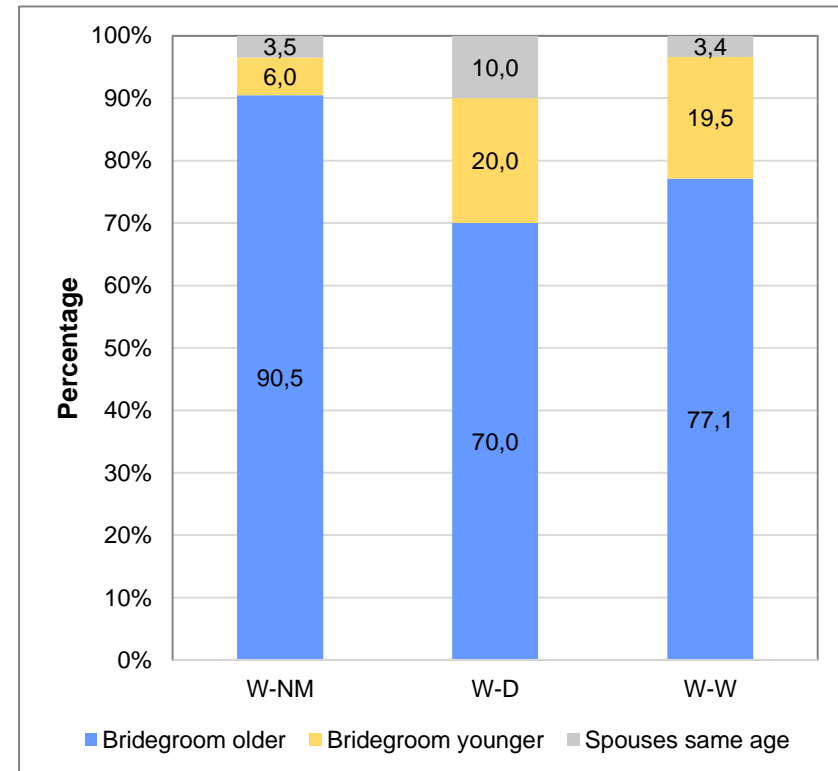
*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding up

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), 2019

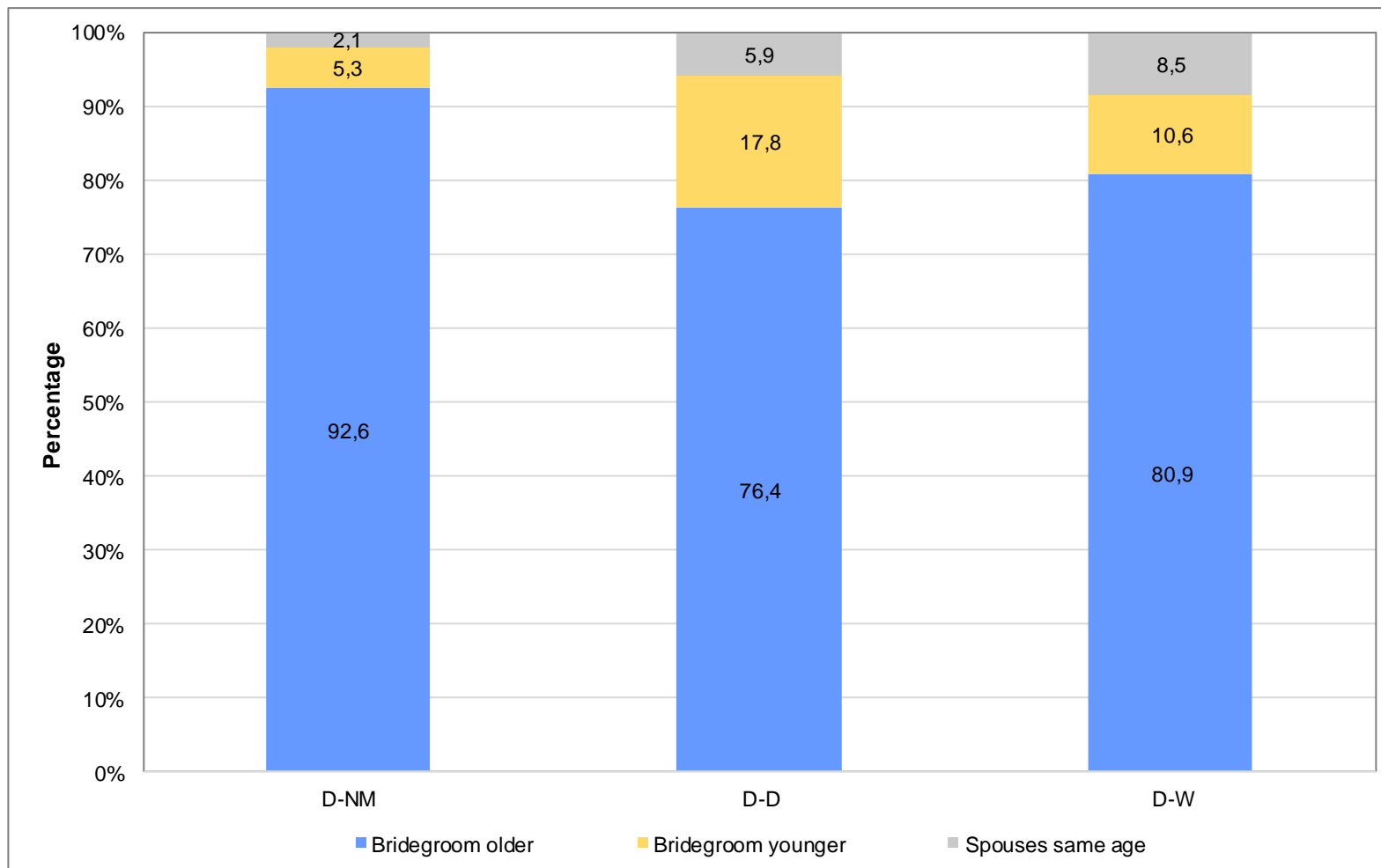


*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding up

W – NM = Widower to Never married women

W – D = Widower to Divorcee

W – W = Widower to Widow

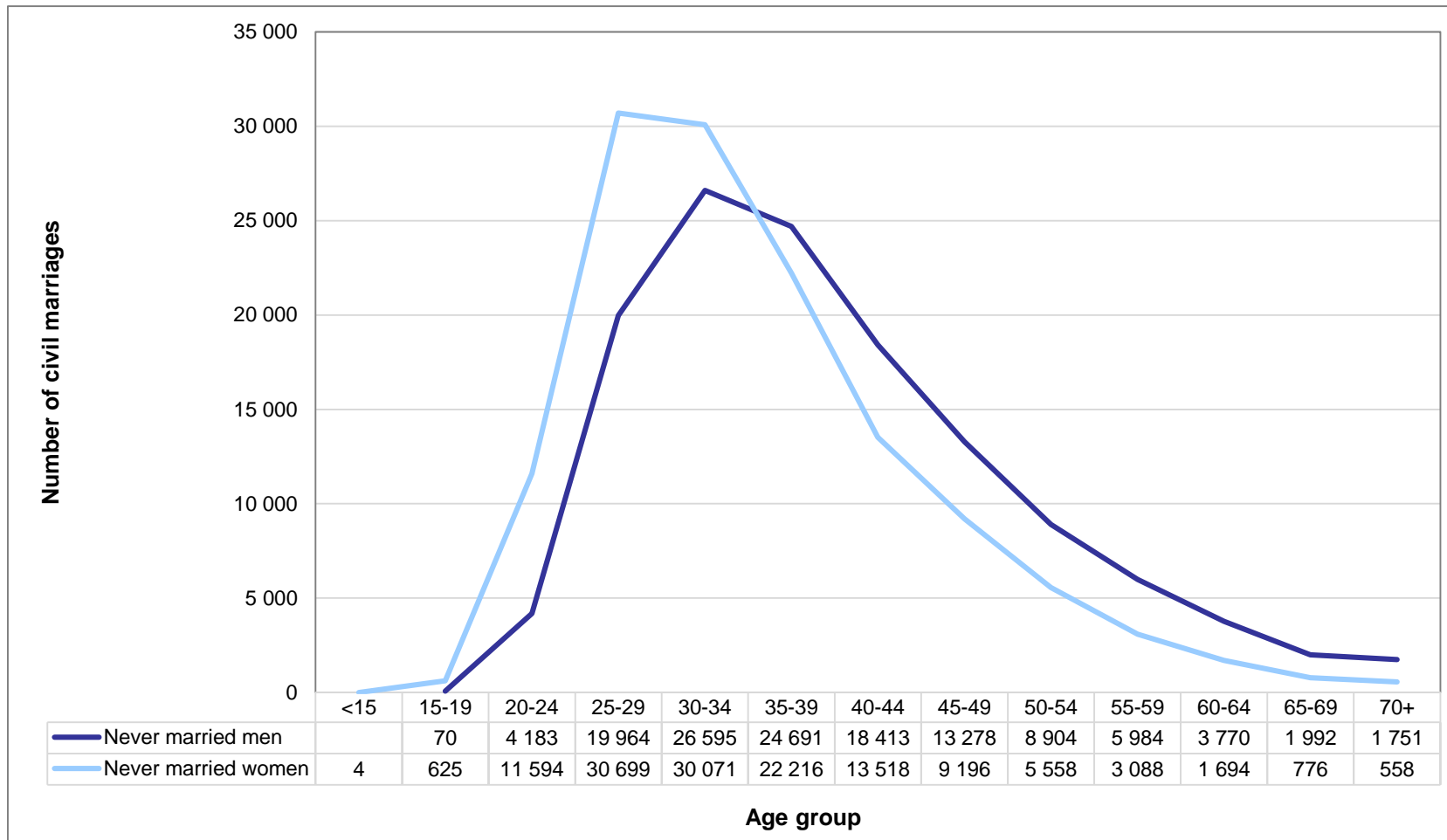
Figure 2c – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (male divorcees), 2019

*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, 2019

*Excluding two cases with unspecified age of never married men.

Figure 4a – Median age of bridegrooms and brides at the time of civil marriage, 2015 – 2019

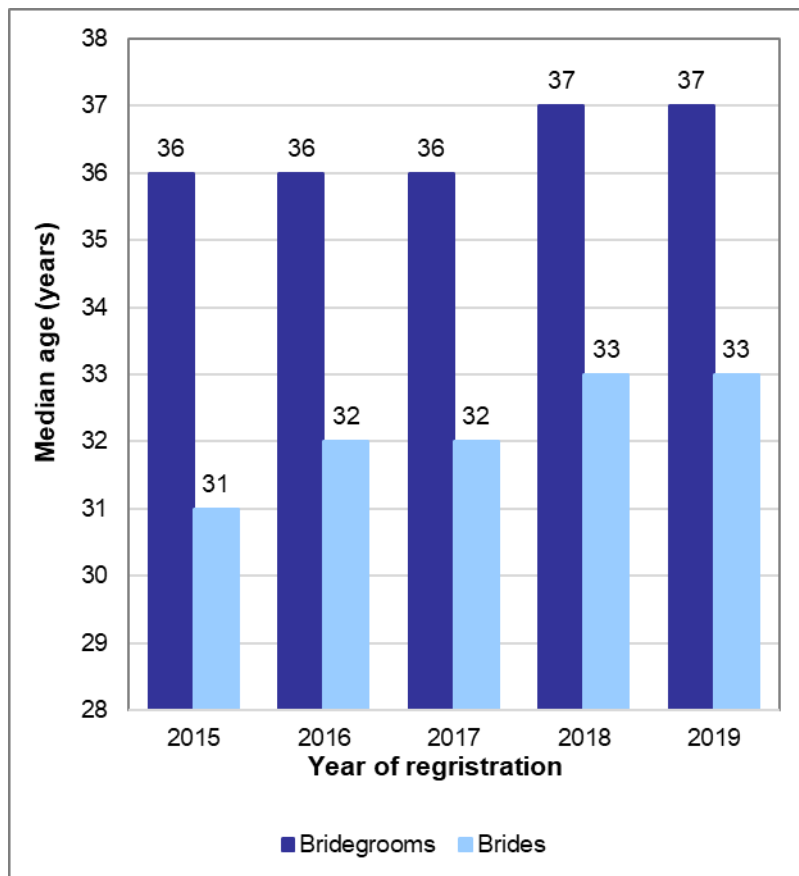


Figure 4b – Median age of never married men and women at the time of civil marriage, 2015 – 2019

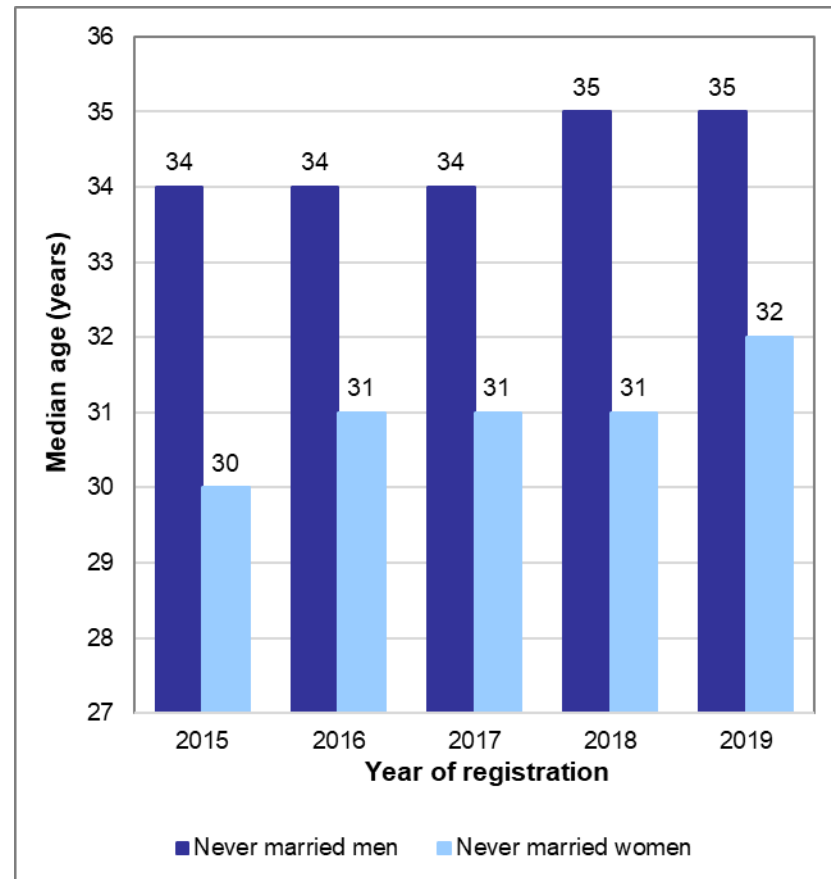


Figure 4c – Median age of widowers and widows at the time of civil marriage, 2015 – 2019

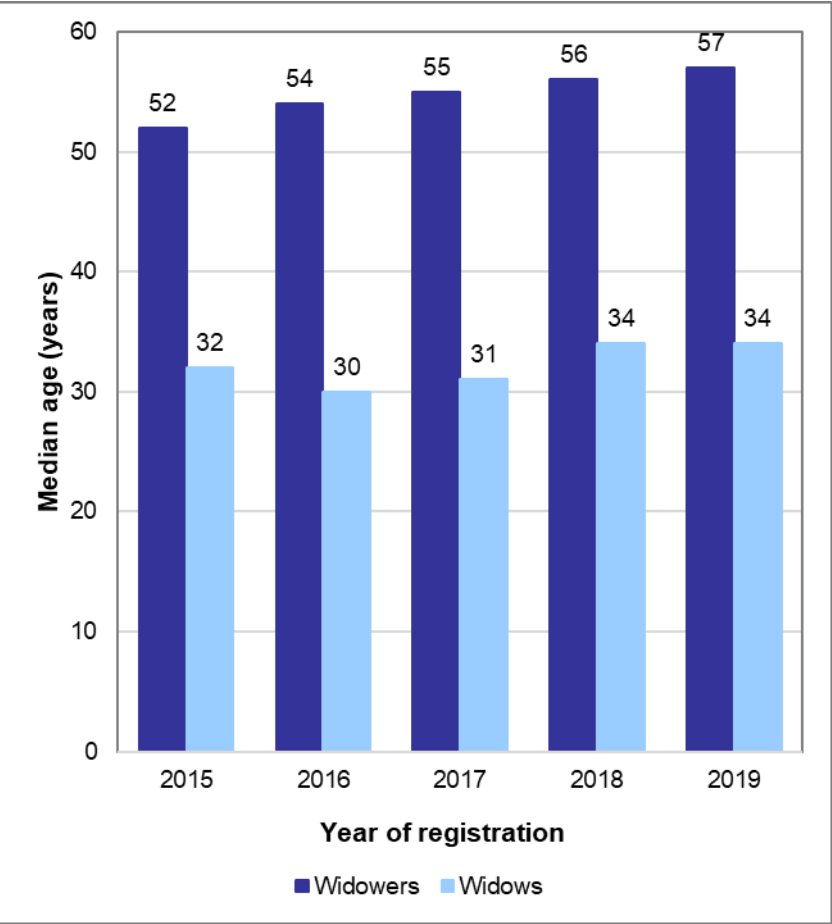


Figure 4d – Median age of male and female divorcees at the time of civil marriage, 2015 – 2019

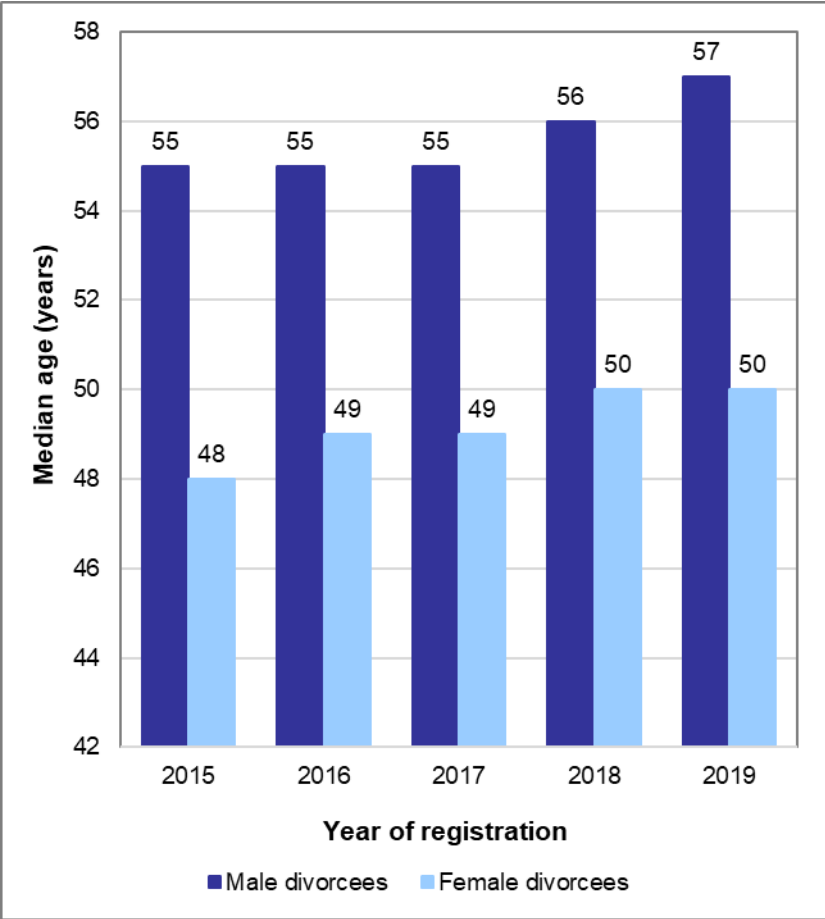
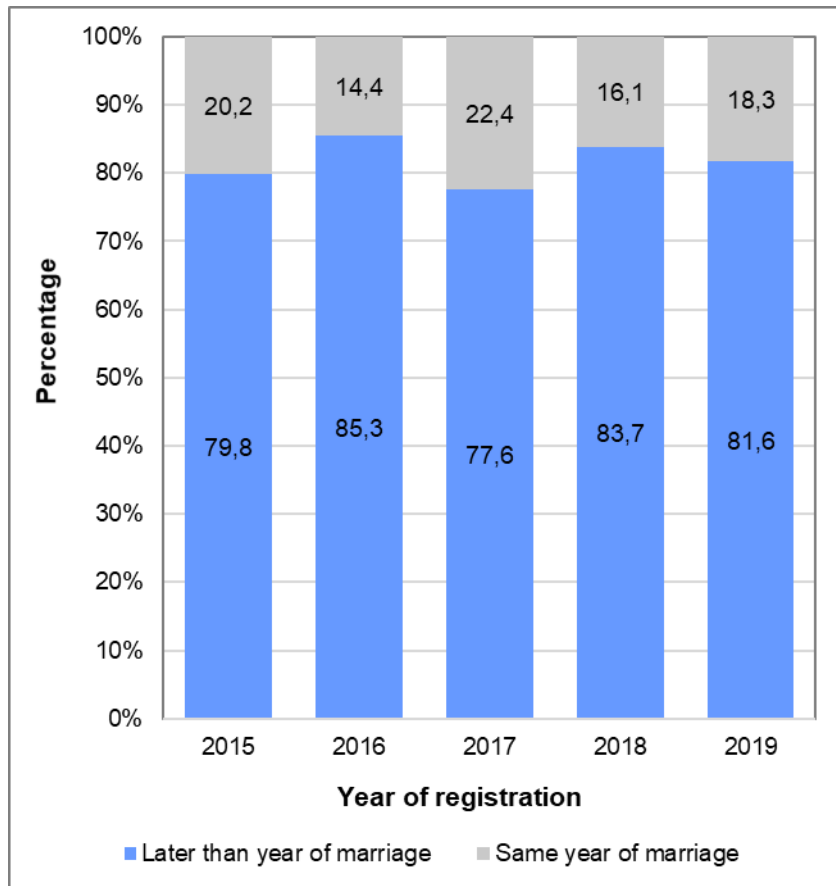


Figure 5 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by year of marriage and time it took to register the marriage, 2015 – 2019



*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, 2015 – 2019

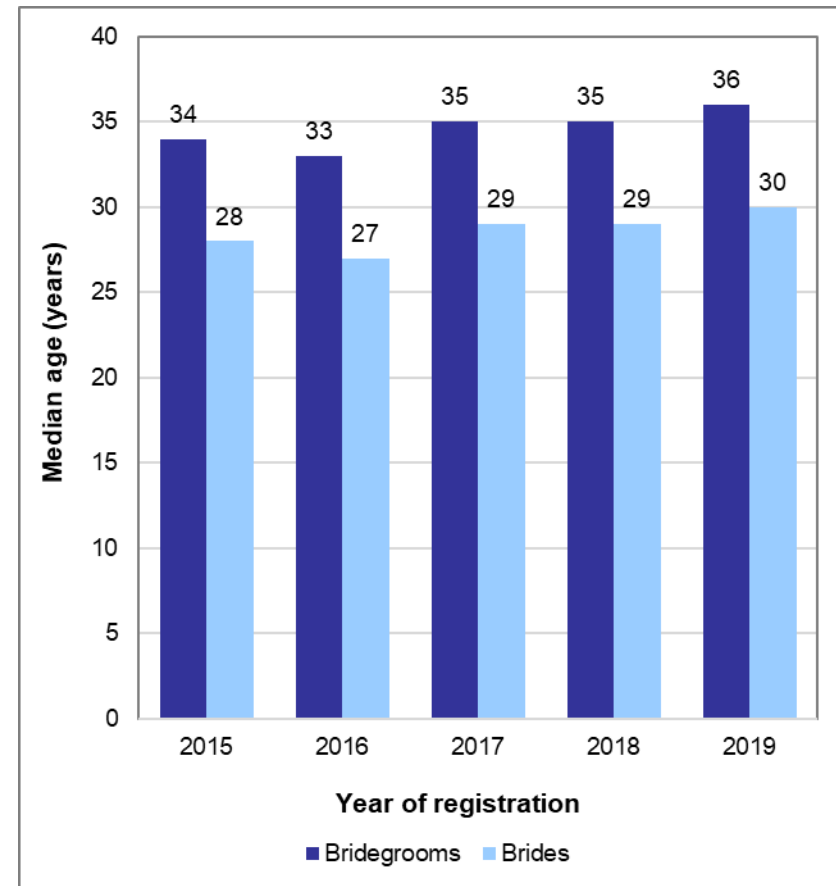
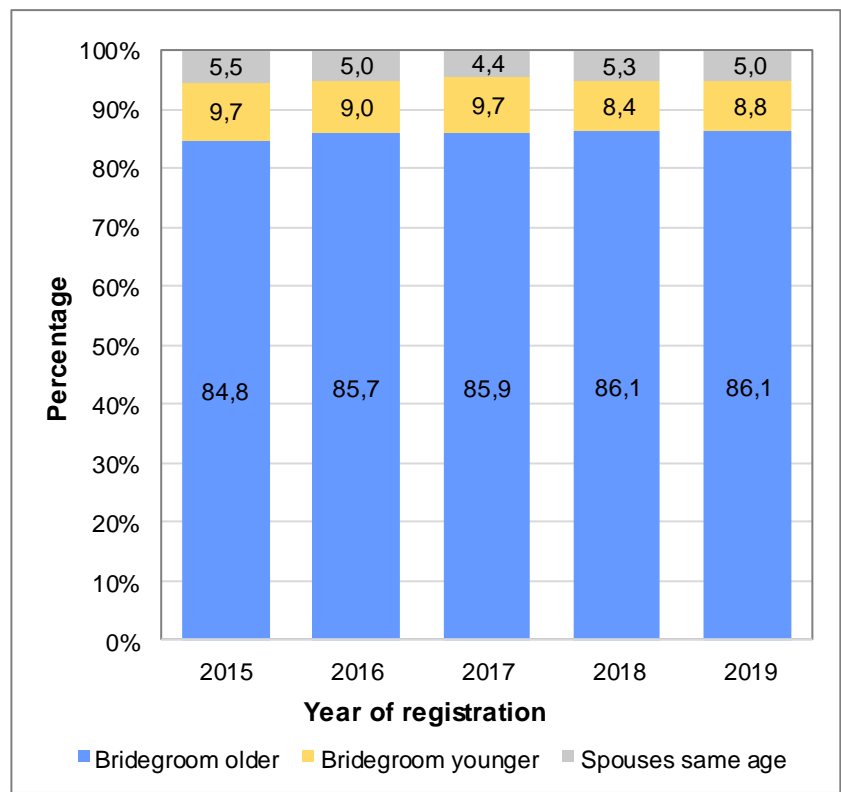


Figure 7 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage, 2015 – 2019



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

Figure 8 – Median age of spouses in civil unions, 2015 – 2019

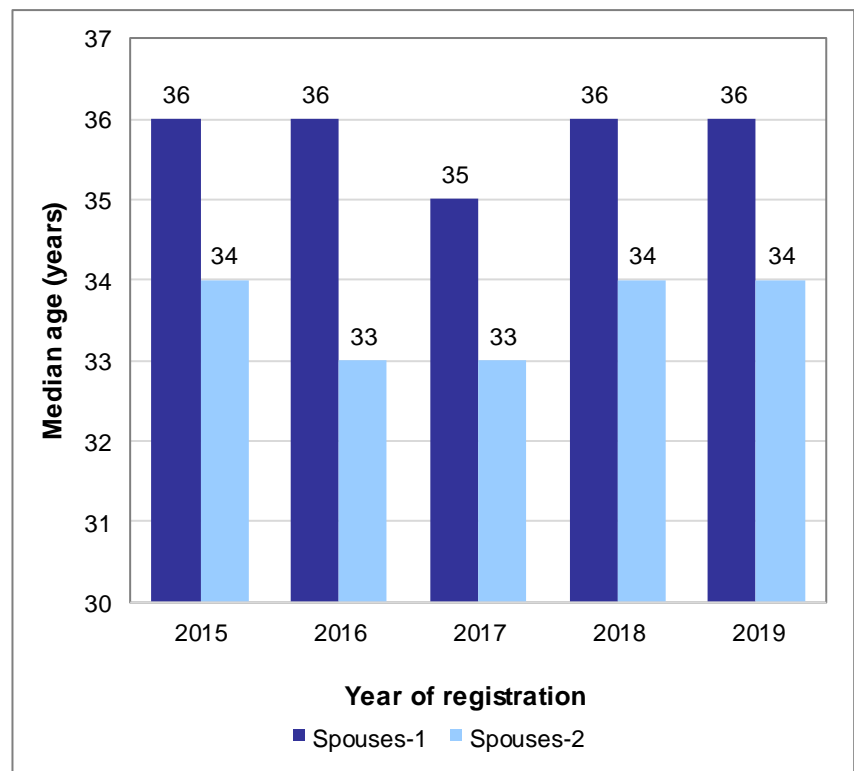
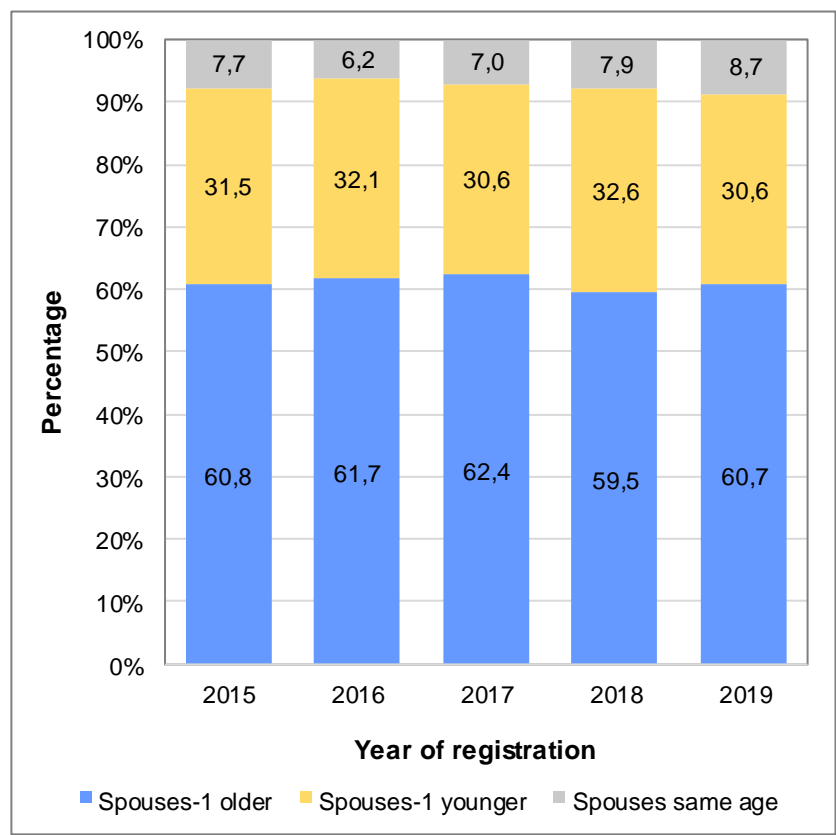


Figure 9 – Percentage distribution of civil unions by age differences between spouses at the time of union, 2015 – 2019



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

Figure 10 – Median age of divorcees by sex and population group, 2019

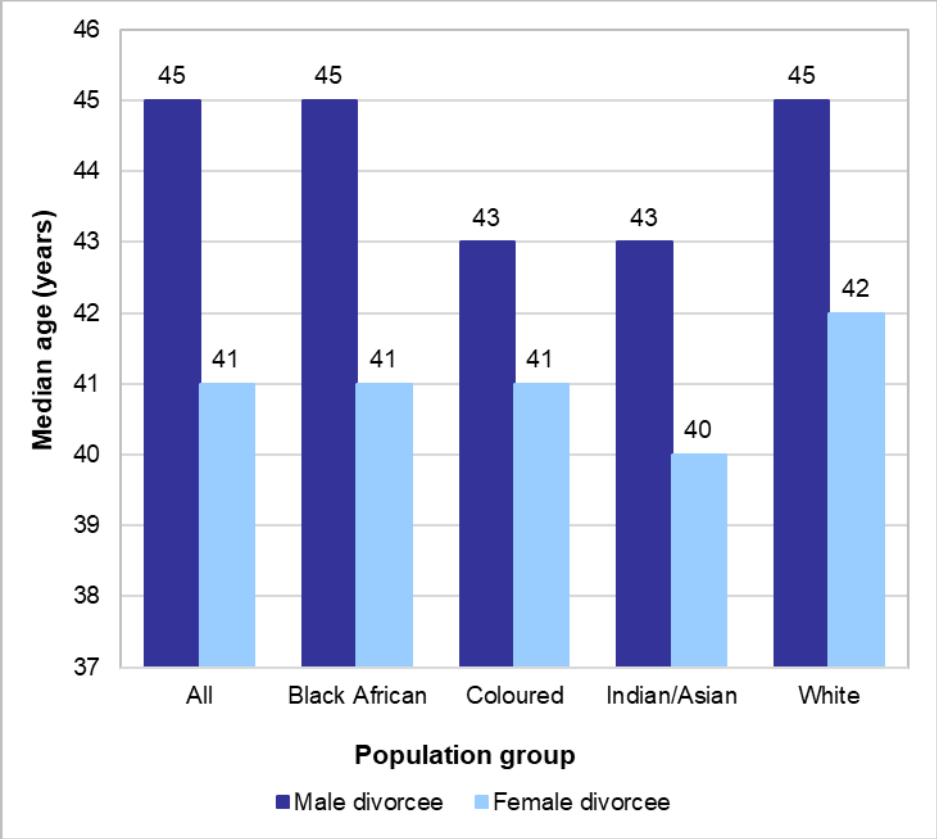


Figure 11 – The proportions of divorces by age and population group (males), 2019

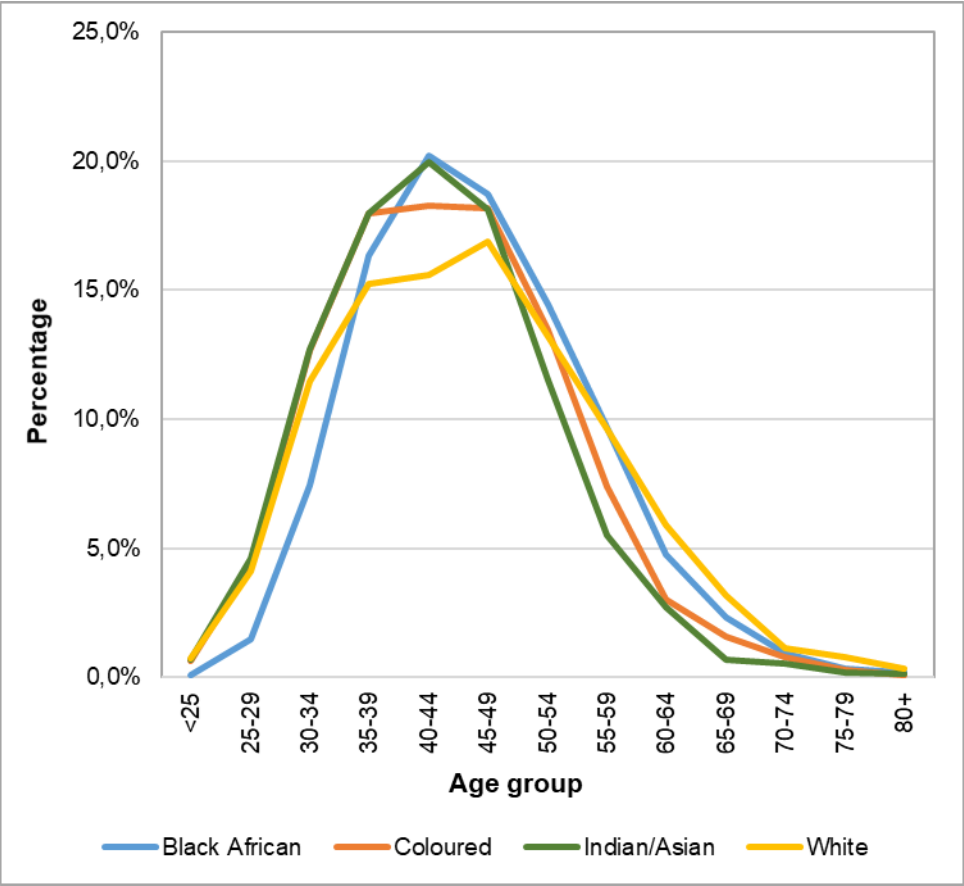


Figure 12 – The proportions of divorces by age group and population group (females), 2019

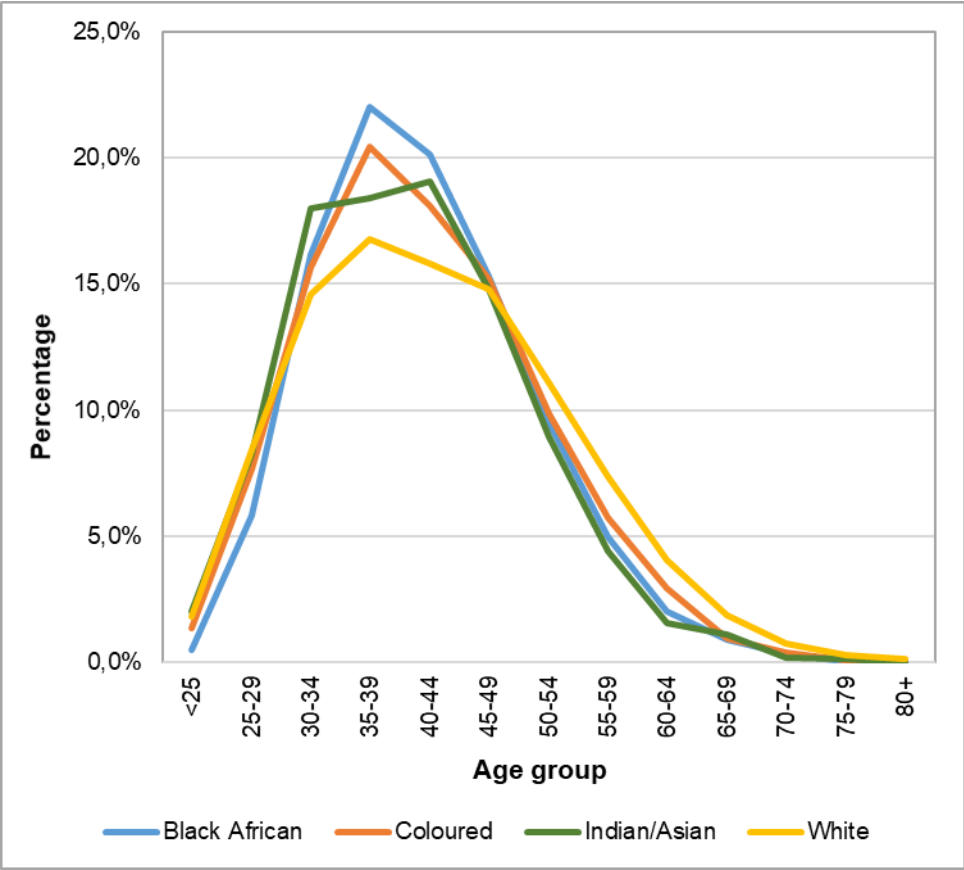


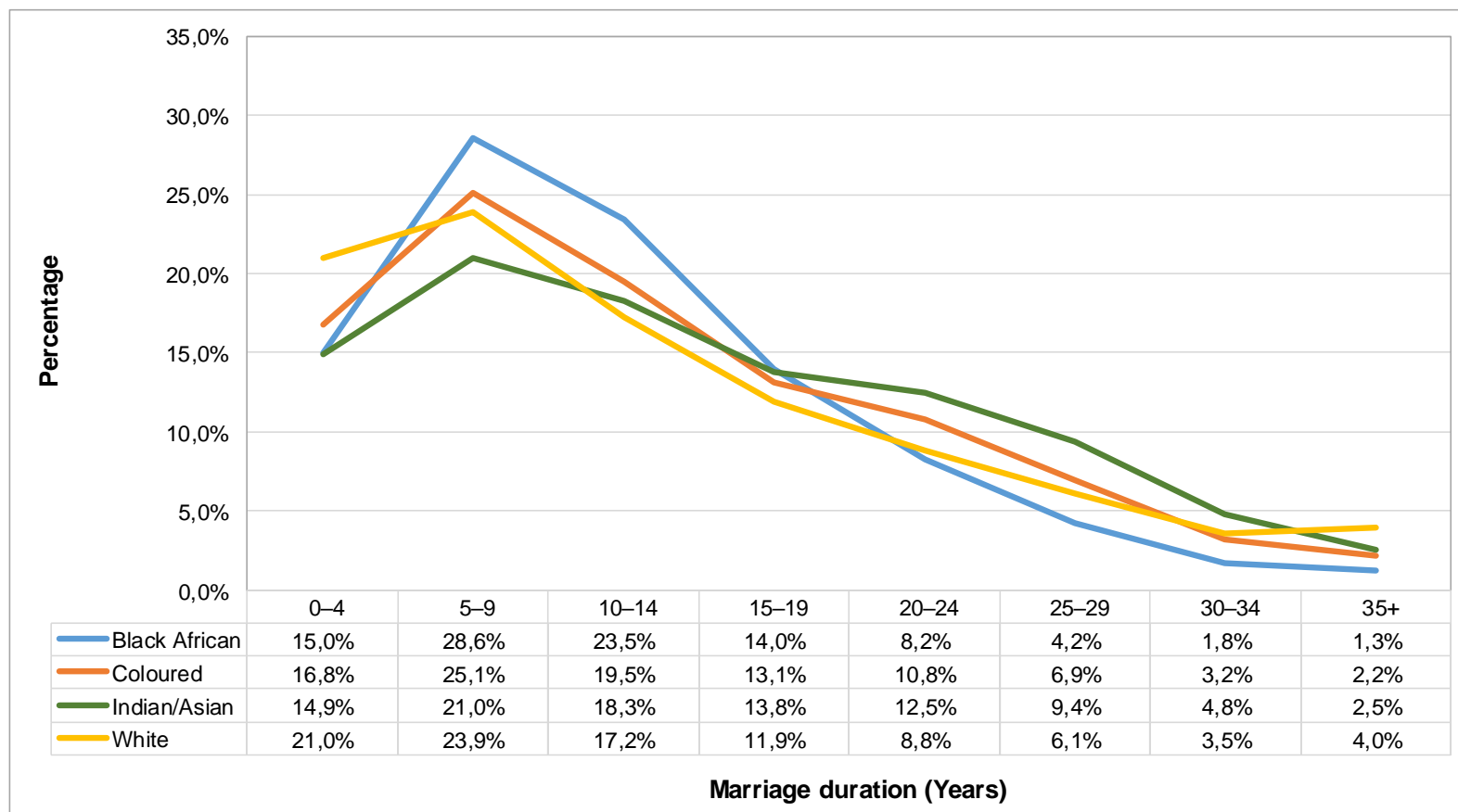
Figure 13 – The proportions of divorces by duration of marriage and population group, 2019

Figure 14 – Number of divorces and crude divorce rate by population group, 2019

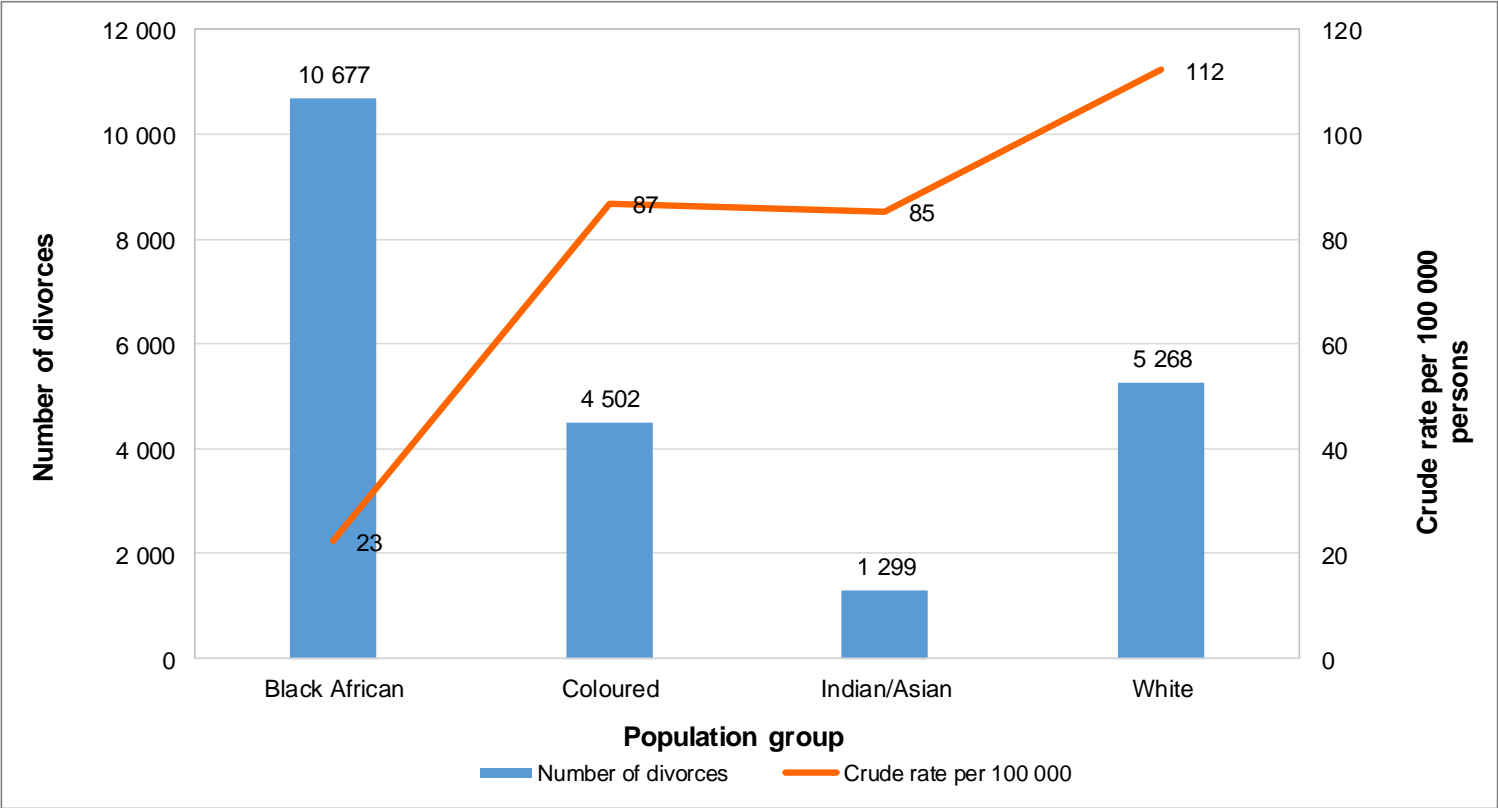


Table 1 – Number of registered civil marriages in South Africa, 2010 – 2019

Year of registration	Number of civil marriages
2010	170 826
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

Table 2 – Number and percentage distribution of civil marriages by province of marriage registration and way of solemnisation, 2019

Province of registration	Grand Total	Way of solemnisation			%			
		DHA	Religious	Unspecified	Total	DHA	Religious	Unspecified
Grand Total	129 597	75 519	40 657	13 421	100,0	58,3	31,4	10,4
Western Cape	16 783	8 492	8 065	226	100,0	50,6	48,1	1,3
Eastern Cape	13 333	8 403	2 886	2 044	100,0	63,0	21,6	15,3
Northern Cape	3 692	2 858	811	23	100,0	77,4	22,0	0,6
Free State	8 700	6 977	1 610	113	100,0	80,2	18,5	1,3
KwaZulu-Natal	21 753	11 720	7 362	2 671	100,0	53,9	33,8	12,3
North West	8 477	5 006	3 205	266	100,0	59,1	37,8	3,1
Gauteng	32 352	19 232	9 639	3 481	100,0	59,4	29,8	10,8
Mpumalanga	7 103	2 553	1 618	2 932	100,0	35,9	22,8	41,3
Limpopo	10 084	7 331	1 218	1 535	100,0	72,7	12,1	15,2
Outside RSA	557	545	7	5	100,0	97,8	1,3	0,9
Unknown	18	9	7	2	100,0	50,0	38,9	11,1
Unspecified	6 745	2 393	4 229	123	100,0	35,5	62,7	1,8

Table 3 – Number of civil marriages by province of registration and marital status of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2019

Province of registration	Bridegroom					Bride				
	Total	Never married men	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never married women	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	129 597	105 163	4 852	918	18 664	129 597	111 464	3 328	622	14 183
Western Cape	16 783	13 159	662	18	2 944	16 783	13 789	572	9	2 413
Eastern Cape	13 333	10 895	594	69	1 775	13 333	11 664	350	41	1 278
Northern Cape	3 692	3 024	220	7	441	3 692	3 229	125	8	330
Free State	8 700	6 984	371	63	1 282	8 700	7 409	272	76	943
KwaZulu-Natal	21 753	18 264	756	226	2 507	21 753	19 409	384	122	1 838
North West	8 477	7 080	328	29	1 040	8 477	7 526	219	24	708
Gauteng	32 352	25 453	1 106	226	5 567	32 352	26 941	859	187	4 365
Mpumalanga	7 103	5 916	221	95	871	7 103	6 225	162	47	669
Limpopo	10 084	8 629	345	135	975	10 084	9 243	141	67	633
Outside RSA	557	492	4	-	61	557	519	5	-	33
Unknown	18	15	1	-	2	18	18	-	-	-
Unspecified	6 745	5 252	244	50	1 199	6 745	5 492	239	41	973

Table 4 – Number of civil marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage and marital status of husband, 2019

Age differences	Grand Total	Never Married					Divorcee				
		Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	129 597	105 163	98 779	1 225	435	4 724	4 852	2 809	800	47	1 196
Bridegroom older	98 714	78 815	75 618	616	332	2 249	4 188	2 602	611	38	937
Bridegroom younger	20 730	17 366	14 660	537	69	2 100	489	149	142	5	193
Same age	10 151	8 980	8 500	72	33	375	175	58	47	4	66
Unspecified	2	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

Age differences	Widower					Unspecified				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Grand Total	918	746	30	118	24	18 664	9 130	1 273	22	8 239
Bridegroom older	808	675	21	91	21	14 903	8 076	798	16	6 013
Bridegroom younger	76	45	6	23	2	2 799	735	396	4	1 664
Same age	34	26	3	4	1	962	319	79	2	562

Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides; and marital status at the time of marriage, 2019

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	129 597	105 163	4 852	918	18 664	129 597	111 464	3 328	622	14 183
<18	3	3	-	-	-	68	60	1	5	2
18	15	15	-	-	-	160	153	1	6	-
19	52	52	-	-	-	401	388	7	5	1
18-19	67	67	-	-	-	561	541	8	11	1
20	129	125		4		758	736	6	13	3
21	307	298	2	5	2	1 355	1 325	3	21	6
22	631	619	-	5	7	2 169	2 127	2	35	5
23	1 156	1 141	-	9	6	3 033	2 981	4	23	25
24	1 960	1 939	1	13	7	4 279	4 205	6	33	35
20-24	4 183	4 122	3	36	22	11 594	11 374	21	125	74
25	2 635	2 612	-	15	8	5 045	4 967	10	25	43
26	3 463	3 415	-	18	30	5 826	5 701	12	28	85
27	4 139	4 076	4	17	42	6 405	6 257	8	25	115
28	4 731	4 636	1	18	76	6 665	6 470	19	27	149
29	4 996	4 883	1	15	97	6 758	6 517	19	20	202
25-29	19 964	19 622	6	83	253	30 699	29 912	68	125	594
30	5 288	5 151	9	13	115	6 670	6 351	25	18	276
31	5 238	5 039	11	17	171	6 116	5 815	28	9	264
32	5 276	5 053	18	15	190	5 930	5 531	35	9	355
33	5 331	5 032	13	8	278	5 765	5 333	35	8	389
34	5 462	5 076	21	9	356	5 590	5 013	42	14	521
30-34	26 595	25 351	72	62	1 110	30 071	28 043	165	58	1 805

Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2019 (continued)

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
35	5 322	4 922	29	8	363	4 979	4 441	56	5	477
36	5 284	4 754	31	3	496	4 916	4 303	65	2	546
37	5 101	4 552	36	4	509	4 584	3 928	55	4	597
38	4 550	4 003	43	5	499	3 948	3 321	66	6	555
39	4 434	3 820	39	5	570	3 789	3 186	75	2	526
35-39	24 691	22 051	178	25	2 437	22 216	19 179	317	19	2 701
40	4 119	3 479	73	2	565	3 219	2 605	72	1	541
41	3 731	3 109	64	4	554	2 713	2 135	89	-	489
42	3 626	2 962	68	1	595	2 677	2 034	92	1	550
43	3 459	2 684	90	7	678	2 553	1 908	99	-	546
44	3 478	2 655	96	-	727	2 356	1 710	93	-	553
40-44	18 413	14 889	391	14	3 119	13 518	10 392	445	2	2 679
45	3 008	2 164	124	2	718	2 261	1 562	123	2	574
46	2 753	1 921	98	2	732	1 918	1 289	103	-	526
47	2 831	1 913	147	3	768	1 918	1 250	137	-	531
48	2 191	1 365	118	1	707	1 507	906	103	-	498
49	2 495	1 557	153	4	781	1 592	956	120	-	516
45-49	13 278	8 920	640	12	3 706	9 196	5 963	586	2	2 645
50	2 116	1 197	161	6	752	1 411	845	100	1	465
51	2 075	1 116	182	13	764	1 302	764	124	7	407
52	1 667	822	150	30	665	1 031	542	111	11	367
53	1 564	774	137	39	614	954	533	90	7	324
54	1 482	706	166	34	576	860	447	112	8	293
50-54	8 904	4 615	796	122	3 371	5 558	3 131	537	34	1 856

Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2019 (concluded)

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
55	1 450	659	165	50	576	710	411	78	18	203
56	1 382	631	172	34	545	727	369	84	15	259
57	1 216	523	155	61	477	651	329	84	19	219
58	920	355	160	34	371	504	235	79	26	164
59	1 016	381	178	44	413	496	235	79	21	161
55-59	5 984	2 549	830	223	2 382	3 088	1 579	404	99	1 006
60	934	356	162	48	368	504	252	92	22	138
61	893	388	158	46	301	387	195	62	16	114
62	787	330	158	32	267	299	131	62	14	92
63	641	244	145	25	227	269	106	67	19	77
64	515	208	115	21	171	235	100	55	13	67
60-64	3 770	1 526	738	172	1 334	1 694	784	338	84	488
65	539	214	138	24	163	191	75	54	8	54
66	464	170	118	21	155	188	70	52	10	56
67	391	176	99	17	99	152	59	41	9	43
68	280	97	91	13	79	130	45	41	3	41
69	318	133	92	17	76	115	57	26	10	22
65-69	1 992	790	538	92	572	776	306	214	40	216
70+	1 479	554	586	62	277	558	200	224	18	116
Unspecified	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 6 – Number of registered customary marriages in South Africa, 2010 – 2019

Year of registration	Number of marriages
2010	9 996
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

Table 7 – Number and percentage distribution of customary marriages by province of marriage registration and age difference, 2019

Province of registration	Number					%				
	Total	Bridegroom older	Bridegroom younger	Same age	Unspecified	Total	Bridegroom older	Bridegroom younger	Same age	Unspecified
Total	2 789	2 401	245	139	4	100,0	86,1	8,8	5,0	0,1
Western Cape	11	9	1	1	-	100,0	81,8	9,1	9,1	0,0
Eastern Cape	230	207	19	3	1	100,0	90,0	8,3	1,3	0,4
Northern Cape	72	52	14	6	-	100,0	72,2	19,4	8,3	0,0
Free State	46	35	9	2	-	100,0	76,1	19,6	4,3	0,0
KwaZulu-Natal	1163	992	102	68	1	100,0	85,3	8,8	5,8	0,1
North West	53	48	2	3	-	100,0	90,6	3,8	5,7	0,0
Gauteng	191	158	23	10	-	100,0	82,7	12,0	5,2	0,0
Mpumalanga	323	273	29	21	-	100,0	84,5	9,0	6,5	0,0
Limpopo	634	568	41	24	1	100,0	89,6	6,5	3,8	0,2
Outside RSA	11	9	1	-	1	100,0	81,8	9,1	0,0	9,1
Unknown	54	49	4	1	-	100,0	90,7	7,4	1,9	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, 2019

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
Total	2 789	2 789
<18	9	121
18	7	82
19	24	91
18-19	31	173
20	44	106
21	46	92
22	65	108
23	68	113
24	65	126
20-24	288	545
25	89	117
26	78	113
27	102	97
28	71	113
29	106	94
25-29	446	534
30	86	109
31	98	101
32	114	109
33	109	93
34	105	102
30-34	512	514

Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2019 (continued)

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
35	106	95
36	93	81
37	100	78
38	92	83
39	77	56
35-39	468	393
40	80	48
41	80	36
42	80	43
43	70	31
44	62	41
40-44	372	199
45	48	23
46	48	35
47	47	27
48	28	19
49	38	22
45-49	209	126
50	32	25
51	36	17
52	38	20
53	36	12
54	32	9
50-54	174	83

Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2019 (concluded)

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
55	26	10
56	28	15
57	17	6
58	17	10
59	19	6
55-59	107	47
60	24	10
61	12	1
62	13	9
63	16	2
64	8	8
60-64	73	30
65	9	5
66	7	5
67	13	1
68	8	3
69	8	-
65-69	45	14
70+	51	6
Unspecified	4	4

Table 9 – Number and percentage distribution of civil unions registered by province of registration, 2015 – 2019

Province of registration	Number					%				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Grand Total	1 185	1 331	1 357	1 650	1 771	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Western Cape	346	358	391	465	443	29,2	26,9	28,8	28,2	25,0
Eastern Cape	49	57	57	58	64	4,1	4,3	4,2	3,5	3,6
Northern Cape	10	15	16	20	18	0,8	1,1	1,2	1,2	1,0
Free State	41	36	42	46	48	3,5	2,7	3,1	2,8	2,7
KwaZulu-Natal	220	249	245	298	216	18,6	18,7	18,1	18,1	12,2
North West	25	29	43	40	41	2,1	2,2	3,2	2,4	2,3
Gauteng	443	494	507	632	779	37,4	37,1	37,4	38,3	44,0
Mpumalanga	24	22	32	31	28	2,0	1,7	2,4	1,9	1,6
Limpopo	16	17	15	13	23	1,4	1,3	1,1	0,8	1,3
Outside RSA	4	4	3	2	6	0,3	0,3	0,2	0,1	0,3
Unspecified	7	50	6	45	105	0,6	3,8	0,4	2,7	5,9

Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2019

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
Total	1 771	1 771
19	1	5
20	2	10
21	5	15
22	15	26
23	15	27
24	33	32
20-24	70	110
25	27	51
26	40	60
27	51	91
28	74	87
29	83	102
25-29	275	391
30	89	97
31	76	99
32	98	86
33	78	75
34	86	86
30-34	427	443

Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2019 (continued)

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
35	83	76
36	62	70
37	68	49
38	58	45
39	55	57
35-39	326	297
40	50	46
41	51	33
42	43	31
43	45	28
44	31	34
40-44	220	172
45	36	27
46	29	21
47	33	29
48	40	25
49	31	32
45-49	169	134
50	30	32
51	24	23
52	18	18
53	25	20
54	8	12
50-54	105	105

Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2019 (concluded)

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
55	13	20
56	25	9
57	14	11
58	10	8
59	20	7
55-59	82	55
60	27	10
61	6	4
62	7	3
63	6	4
64	8	5
60-64	54	26
65	6	10
66	8	2
67	1	2
68	3	0
69	3	4
65-69	21	18
70+	21	15

Table 11 – Number and percentage distribution of published divorces in South Africa by population group, 2010 – 2019

Year	Total	Numbers						%						
		Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified
2010	22 936	8 169	3 189	1 294	6 995	31	3 258	100,0	35,6	13,9	5,6	30,5	0,1	14,2
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

Table 12 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by type of occupation at the time of divorce, 2019

Occupation	Number		%	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Grand total	23 710	23 710	100,0	100,0
Professionals, semi-professionals and technical occupations	2 926	3 327	12,3	14,0
Managers and administrators	2 845	1 592	12,0	6,7
Clerical and sales occupations	1 332	2 817	5,6	11,9
Transport delivery and communications	903	81	3,8	0,3
Services occupations	3 360	2 700	14,2	11,4
Farming and related occupations	79	7	0,3	0,0
Artisans apprentice and related occupations	1 238	162	5,2	0,7
Production foreman mine and quarry worker	603	222	2,5	0,9
Not economically active	4 132	5 758	17,4	24,3
Unspecified	6 292	7 044	26,5	29,7

Table 13 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and plaintiff, 2019

Population group	Number				%			
	Total	Husbands	Wives	Unspecified	Total	Husbands	Wives	Unspecified
Grand Total	23 710	8 210	12 615	2 885	100,0	34,6	53,2	12,2
Black African	10 677	3 953	5 219	1 505	100,0	37,0	48,9	14,1
Coloured	4 502	1 427	2 608	467	100,0	31,7	57,9	10,4
Indian/Asian	1 299	428	743	128	100,0	32,9	57,2	9,9
White	5 268	1 760	3 069	439	100,0	33,4	58,3	8,3
Mixed	816	276	437	103	100,0	33,8	53,6	12,6
Unspecified	1 148	366	539	243	100,0	31,9	47,0	21,2

Table 14 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by province of divorce registration and plaintiff, 2019

Province of divorce registration	Number				%			
	Total	Husbands	Wives	Unspecified	Total	Husbands	Wives	Unspecified
Grand Total	23 710	8 210	12 615	2 885	100,0	34,6	53,2	12,2
Western Cape	6 108	2 025	3 433	650	100,0	33,2	56,2	10,6
Eastern Cape	3 137	1 010	1 703	424	100,0	32,2	54,3	13,5
Northern Cape	521	175	255	91	100,0	33,6	48,9	17,5
Free State	1 745	693	966	86	100,0	39,7	55,4	4,9
KwaZulu-Natal	4 033	1 474	2 027	532	100,0	36,5	50,3	13,2
North West	176	65	98	13	100,0	36,9	55,7	7,4
Gauteng	6 318	2 153	3 273	892	100,0	34,1	51,8	14,1
Mpumalanga	587	207	305	75	100,0	35,3	52,0	12,8
Limpopo	1 085	408	555	122	100,0	37,6	51,2	11,2

Table 15 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and way of solemnisation of the marriage, 2019

Population group	Number				%			
	Total	Religious	DHA	Unspecified	Total	Religious	DHA	Unspecified
Total	23 710	10 876	10 581	2 253	100,0	45,9	44,6	9,5
Black African	10 677	3 110	7 050	517	100,0	29,1	66,0	4,8
Coloured	4 502	2 973	1 137	392	100,0	66,0	25,3	8,7
Indian/Asian	1 299	429	682	188	100,0	33,0	52,5	14,5
White	5 268	3 626	928	714	100,0	68,8	17,6	13,6
Mixed	816	325	401	90	100,0	39,8	49,1	11,0
Unspecified	1 148	413	383	352	100,0	36,0	33,4	30,7

Table 16 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by number of times married at the time of divorce, 2019

Number of times married	Number		%	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Total	23 710	23 710	100,0	100,0
Once	19 535	19 803	82,4	83,5
Twice	2 805	2 402	11,8	10,1
Three or more	321	282	1,4	1,2
Unspecified	1 049	1 223	4,4	5,2

Table 17 – Number of divorces by age and population group (male divorcees), 2019

Age group	Population group						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other	Unspecified
Total	23 710	11 020	4 779	1 473	5 506	70	862
<25	90	9	31	10	40	-	-
25-29	686	162	208	68	226	1	21
30-34	2 314	820	605	187	631	4	67
35-39	3 894	1 799	860	265	838	16	116
40-44	4 417	2 225	873	294	858	10	157
45-49	4 297	2 065	869	267	930	9	157
50-54	3 252	1 594	644	170	726	4	114
55-59	2 109	1 066	353	81	529	3	77
60-64	1 089	523	144	40	325	2	55
65-69	538	255	75	10	175	-	23
70-74	227	106	39	8	63	1	10
75-79	97	36	13	3	43	1	1
80+	52	24	5	2	18	-	3
Unspecified	648	336	60	68	104	19	61

Table 18 – Number of divorces by age group and population group (female divorcees), 2019

Age group	Population group						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other	Unspecified
Total	23 710	10 969	4 957	1 428	5 375	18	963
<25	249	52	67	29	97	-	4
25-29	1 641	638	380	118	454	-	51
30-34	3 715	1 776	776	257	785	1	120
35-39	4 780	2 415	1 013	263	902	-	187
40-44	4 386	2 211	898	272	849	1	155
45-49	3 587	1 676	753	211	796	1	150
50-54	2 360	1 041	488	128	595	3	105
55-59	1 348	546	283	63	396	-	60
60-64	645	222	145	22	219	-	37
65-69	276	96	48	16	99	1	16
70-74	108	38	20	3	39	-	8
75-79	31	6	4	2	16	-	3
80+	14	3	4	-	6	-	1
Unspecified	570	249	78	44	122	11	66

Table 19 – Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (male divorcees), 2019

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	23 710	3 996	6 225	4 964	3 137	2 138	1 286	623	515	826
<25	90	84	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
25-29	686	478	179	3	-	-	-	-	-	26
30-34	2 314	900	1 131	206	7	-	-	-	-	70
35-39	3 894	862	1 712	1 028	166	3	-	-	-	123
40-44	4 417	609	1 286	1 439	763	167	7	-	-	146
45-49	4 297	394	768	1 079	1 000	705	191	1	-	159
50-54	3 252	247	455	558	593	623	550	112	5	109
55-59	2 109	145	259	260	313	355	328	296	70	83
60-64	1 089	95	123	116	127	136	113	133	202	44
65-69	538	47	73	57	58	62	49	43	133	16
70-74	227	21	25	24	23	26	20	20	57	11
75-79	97	6	15	15	8	12	6	7	26	2
80+	52	5	10	4	7	8	3	1	10	4
Unspecified	648	103	185	175	72	41	19	10	12	31

Table 20 – Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (female divorcees), 2019

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	23 710	3 996	6 225	4 964	3 137	2 138	1 286	623	515	826
<25	249	210	26	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
25-29	1 641	873	682	35	-	-	-	-	-	51
30-34	3 715	1 057	1 815	690	35	-	-	-	-	118
35-39	4 780	718	1 653	1 713	502	32	-	-	-	162
40-44	4 386	399	902	1 245	1 150	489	54	-	-	147
45-49	3 587	303	520	618	760	798	429	32	-	127
50-54	2 360	179	236	308	367	458	493	223	22	74
55-59	1 348	82	141	142	158	204	179	236	152	54
60-64	645	48	67	62	57	65	71	74	178	23
65-69	276	26	25	26	22	31	24	35	79	8
70-74	108	5	6	8	10	11	7	7	50	4
75-79	31	3	3	1	3	1	4	1	15	-
80+	14	-	4	1	-	2	1	1	4	1
Unspecified	570	93	145	115	73	47	24	14	15	44

Table 21 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and divorces with and without children (aged below 18 years), 2019

Population group	Total	Divorces with children	Divorces without children	Total	Divorces with children	Divorces without children
Total	23 710	13 264	10 446	100,0	55,9	44,1
Black African	10 677	6 507	4 170	100,0	60,9	39,1
Coloured	4 502	2 837	1 665	100,0	63,0	37,0
Indian/Asian	1 299	674	625	100,0	51,9	48,1
White	5 268	2 323	2 945	100,0	44,1	55,9
Mixed	816	431	385	100,0	52,8	47,2
Unspecified	1 148	492	656	100,0	42,9	57,1

Table 22 – Number and percentage distribution of population group by children (aged below 18 years) affected by divorces, 2019

Population group	Total number of children involved	%
Total	22 084	100,0
Black African	10 956	49,6
Coloured	4 815	21,8
Indian/Asian	1 050	4,8
White	3 744	17,0
Mixed	699	3,2
Unspecified	820	3,7

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 2019. 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 2019 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 2019, Stats SA received and processed 23 710 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. Reference

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GENERAL INFORMATION

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