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## **STATISTICAL RELEASE**

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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 2021 in the South African national marriage registration system maintained by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). It highlights trends in the number of marriages and unions as well as demographic and other dynamics amongst married partners. The release also reports on divorces that were granted in 2021 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 younger 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.



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## KEY FINDINGS

### 1. Introduction

There are three main sources of marriage and divorce statistics in South Africa; namely, those compiled from population censuses; household sample surveys and administrative data (i.e. those compiled from civil registration systems and administrative records). The data from these sources provides information on different aspects of marriages and divorces in the country. Census and survey data are by nature subjective, information provides cross-sectional data on individuals' marital status (never married, married, divorced, widowed, etc.). Marriages and divorces in this report cover different types of marriages and associated divorces that took place at different periods in people's lives but registered/granted in 2021. The 2021 mid-year population estimates [*Mid-year population estimates, 2021* (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 2021. 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 (2012 – 2021)

Information provided in Table 1, on page 19, shows that 106 499 civil marriages of South African citizens and permanent residents were registered at the Department of Home Affairs in 2021. Table 1 further shows that the number of registered marriages consistently declined in the ten-year period (2012 to 2021), except for a slight increase of 0,6% between 2015 and 2016 and an increase of 19,2% between 2020 and 2021. During the period 2012 to 2021, the highest number of marriages was recorded in 2012 (161 112) and the lowest number in 2020 (89 338). The 2021 figure of 106 499 civil marriages shows an increase of 19,2% from the 89 338 marriages recorded in 2020. The seasonal monthly variation in the registration of civil marriages is observed in Figure 1 on page 9. Generally, the warmer months (beginning from September and peaking in December) are the most popular months for solemnising marriages in South Africa. In 2021, the highest number of marriages [13 810 (13,0%)] took place in December and the lowest number of marriages, [3 643 (3,4%)] and [3 579 (3,4%)] occurred in February and January respectively.

#### 2.1.2 Solemnisation of civil marriages

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

Table 2 on page 20, shows the distribution of civil marriages registered in 2021 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, 59 027 (55,4%) of the 106 499 marriages were solemnised by DHA marriage officers and 35 371 (33,2%) by 'Religious' rites. The type of solemnisation rite was not specified in 12 101 (11,4%) marriages. Table 2 further shows that 300 (0,3%) marriages of South African citizens and permanent residents were solemnised outside the borders of South Africa but subsequently registered in South Africa. In 2021, the observed crude civil marriage rate was 178 per 100 000 estimated resident population<sup>1</sup>.

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 2021, the highest number of marriages was registered in Gauteng [26 522 (24,9%)] and the lowest in Northern Cape [3 198 (3,0%)]. Looking at ways of marriage solemnisation within each province, Free State had the highest proportion of marriages, 77,8% (5 274) solemnised by civil marriage officers. Western Cape recorded the highest proportion, 49,4% (7 975) of marriages solemnised by religious marriage officers. Wide differences of 'unspecified' way of solemnisation by province were noted. For example, 36,2% (1 913) of marriages in Mpumalanga had 'unspecified' method of solemnisation compared with 1,6% (262) in Western Cape.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 21 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 2021 for both bridegrooms and brides were first-time marriages in all provinces. For bridegrooms, there were 86 269 (81,0%) never married men, 4 047 (3,8%) divorcees and 573 (0,5%) widowers. For the brides, there were 91 776 (86,2%) never married women whilst 2 625 (2,5%) were divorcees and 339 (0,3%) were widows. The marital status of 15 610 (14,7%) bridegrooms and 11 759 (11,0%) brides were unspecified. The highest proportion of marriages between bridegrooms and brides marrying for the first time was observed in Limpopo contributing 5 702 (84,3%) and 6 198 (91,7%) respectively. The profile of those that were remarrying showed that remarriages were more prevalent in divorcees compared to the widowed, 4 047 (3,8%) bridegroom divorcees compared to 573 (0,5%) widowers and 2 625 (2,5%) bride divorcees compared to 339 (0,3%) widows.

The number of marriages by marital status of husband and age differences between spouses are shown in Table 4 on page 22. It is observed that irrespective of their marital status, men generally married women who had never been married. Thus 81 285 (94,2%) of never married men wedded never married women, 853 (1,0%) married divorcees and 238 (0,3%) married widows. In addition, irrespective of the fact that more male divorcees and widowers wedded never married women, the proportion of male divorcees who married female divorcees, 740 (18,3%) was higher than the proportion that married widows, 17 (0,4%). Similarly, the proportion of widowers who married widows, 67 (11,7%) was higher than the proportion that married female divorcees, 18 (3,1%).

Table 4 also suggests that men tend to marry younger women, as 80 138 (75,2%) of the 106 499 bridegrooms were older than their brides. However, 17 195 (16,1%) bridegrooms were younger than their brides and 9 166 (8,6%) 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 to 11). However, the magnitude differs by the marital status of the spouses at the time of marriage. For example, 43,6% of never married men who married divorcees were younger than their brides (see Figure 2a) and 5,9% of male divorcees who married widowed women were also younger than their brides (see Figure 2c). A relatively smaller percentage (4,7%) 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 2021, there were five marriages for bridegrooms younger than 18 years and 32 brides aged younger than 18 years were registered. Thirty of these brides were marrying for the first time (see Table 5 on page 23). Figure 3 on page 11 indicates that the highest number of never married men [21 241 (24,6%)] were aged 30–34 years whereas the highest number of never married women [24 666 (26,9%)] were aged 25–29 years. There were more never married women compared to never married men at younger ages (less than 35 years) and vice versa at older ages (35 years and older).



Figure 4a on page 12 shows the median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage. Median ages at marriage in 2017 was 36 years for bridegrooms and 32 years for brides. The median ages of bridegrooms and brides remained the same from 2018 to 2021 with 37 years and 33 years for bridegrooms and brides respectively. This includes those marrying for the first time, as well as those who were remarrying as a result of being divorced or widowed.

Figure 4a to Figure 4d on pages 12 and 13 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), compared with 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 2021, showing an age difference of three years (see Figure 4b). For remarriages, the median age for widowers and widows in 2021 (see Figure 4c) were 58 years and 31 years respectively, resulting in a 27-year age gap. The median age for widowers increased from 55 years in 2017 to 58 years in 2021. The median age of widows ranged between 31 years and 39 years during 2017 and 2021.

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 2017 to 58 years in 2021 whereas the median age of female divorcee ranged between 49 years in 2017 and 51 years in 2021. There was a seven-year age difference in the median ages between male and female divorcees who married in 2021.

## 2.2 Customary marriages

### 2.2.1 Trends in the registration of customary marriages (2012–2021)

In 2021, 2 676 customary marriages were registered at the Department of Home Affairs, indicating an increase of 68,8% from 1 585 customary marriages registered in 2020. It is observed from Table 6 on page 26 that the number of registered customary marriages fluctuated between 2012 and 2021. The highest number of registered customary marriages was recorded in 2012 (4 555) whilst the lowest number was recorded in 2020 (1 585). The observed crude customary marriage rate was 4 per 100 000 estimated resident population in 2021<sup>2</sup>.

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 14 shows that the majority of customary marriages were registered later than the year of marriage. In 2021, about 12,3% 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 27 show that in 2021, about 749 (28,0%) of the registered customary marriages were from KwaZulu-Natal followed by Limpopo with 714 (26,7%), Mpumalanga 380 (14,2%) and Eastern Cape 350 (13,1%). The other five (5) provinces had less than 10% each. The age distribution of bridegrooms and brides at the time of customary marriage is presented in Table 8 on page 28. In 2021, there were 14 (0,5%) bridegrooms and 156 (5,8%) brides who were younger than 18 years. Table 8 further indicates that a higher number of bridegrooms 476 (17,8%) were aged 30–34 years and brides were predominant at ages 25–29 years, 565 (21,1%).

The median ages at the time of customary marriage are presented in Figure 6 on page 14. Similar to civil marriages, bridegrooms were generally older than brides, with an age difference of about six to seven years for customary marriages registered between 2017 and 2021. The median ages of both bridegrooms and brides have

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<sup>2</sup> The crude customary marriage rate refers to the number of customary marriages per 100 000 persons in the population.

been increasing over the period 2017 to 2021. The median age of bridegrooms ranged between 35 years and 36 years whereas that of bride ranged between 29 years and 30 years. A further comparison of the ages of bridegrooms and brides (see Figure 7 on page 15) shows that in 2021, 87,2% of bridegrooms were older than their brides whilst 8,3% were younger than their brides, and 4,4% 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 (2017 – 2021)

Table 9 on page 31 shows that in 2021, 2 240 civil unions were registered. In 2021, the crude civil union rate was 4 per 100 000 estimated resident population<sup>3</sup>. In general, the number of civil unions registered in South Africa increased between 2017 and 2021. Civil unions registered increased by over half, 52,3% from 1 471 in 2020 to 2 240 in 2021. The provincial distribution of civil unions registered in 2021 indicates that Gauteng 1 193 (53,3%) and Western Cape 553 (24,7%) were the provinces with the highest number of registrations of civil unions. In total, over three quarters (77,9%) of civil unions in 2021 were registered in these two provinces. The lowest number of registered civil unions was recorded in Northern Cape 20 (0,9%) and Limpopo 16 (0,7%).

### 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 32. 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 shows that the highest number of spouses-1 and spouses-2 were aged 30–34 with [665 (29,7%)] and [639 (28,5%)] respectively.

As observed in Figure 8 on page 15, the median ages of spouses-1 were higher than those of spouses-2. The median ages of spouses-1 was fluctuating between 35 years and 36 years over the five year period, 2017 to 2021 while the median ages of spouses-2 was fluctuating between 33 years and 34 years on the same period. Over the five-year period, the yearly differences in the median ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 was two years. Information in Figure 9 on page 16 further shows that in 2021, 60,3% of spouses-1 were older than their spouses, whilst 29,2% were younger than their spouses and 10,5% were of the same age as their spouses.

### 2.3.3 Marital status at the time of civil union

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

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<sup>3</sup> 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 (2012 – 2021)

The 2021 divorce data reported in this statistical release is based on 18 208 completed divorce forms that Stats SA received and processed. The number (18 208) indicates an increase of 2 111 (13,1%) divorces from the 16 097 cases processed in 2020 (see Table 11 on page 35). The table shows that the total number of divorces increased from 2012 to 2017 and decreased from 2018 to 2020. In 2021, about 143 divorces were granted for same-sex couples. The observed crude divorce rate was 30 divorces per 100 000 estimated resident population in 2021<sup>4</sup>.

Table 11 also provides data on divorces classified by population group and the year in which the divorce was granted. In 2021, 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 (2012 to 2021). About 9 175 (50,4%) of the 18 208 divorces granted in 2021 were from black African population group followed by white 3 652 (20,1%), coloured 3 202 (17,6%), India/Asian 881 (4,8%) and divorces from different population groups (mixed) 499 (2,7%). The population group of 799 couples was not specified.

Figure 14 on page 18 demonstrates the number of divorces and crude divorce rate by population group. The crude divorce rates by population groups show that the white population group had the highest rate of 78 per 100 000 estimated resident population followed by the coloured and Indian/Asian population groups with 61 and 57 per 100 000 respectively. The black African population had 19 per 100 000 estimated resident population.

Table 12 on page 36 indicates information on the occupation of husbands and wives at the time of divorce. It is noted that a high proportion of husbands (26,2%) and wives (27,8%) did not specify the type of occupation they were engaged in at the time of divorce. In addition, 22,1% and 28,5% of husbands and wives respectively were not economically active / unemployed at the time of divorce. Both male and female divorcees were largely employed in professional, semi-professional and technical occupations with 2 707 (14,9%) and 2 906 (16,0%) respectively.

#### 3.2 Characteristics of plaintiffs

The 2021 data presented in Table 13 on page 37 show that more wives than husbands, 9 981 (54,8%) women compared to 6 142 (33,7%) men initiated divorce proceedings and 921 (5,1%) divorces were initiated by both husband and wife. The sex of the plaintiff was not specified in 1 164 (6,4%) cases. The proportion of women plaintiffs for the coloured population group, Indian/Asian population group and white population group were 61,2%, 60,5% and 58,1% respectively. The plaintiffs for the interracial couples show that 57,3% of the divorces were filed by wives. Among black African divorcees, divorce initiated by both partners constituted about 6,5%.

Table 14 on page 37 provides information on the province and sex of the plaintiff. The provincial distribution indicates that Gauteng (4 859), Western Cape (3 833), KwaZulu-Natal (2 851) and Eastern Cape (2 138) were the provinces with the highest number of divorces granted. Together the four provinces contributed three quarter (75,1%) of the divorces granted in 2021. However, this could also be due to the fact that these provinces have the largest populations.

#### 3.3 Number of divorces by way of solemnisation of marriage

Information presented in Table 15 on page 38 shows that 8 715 (47,9%) of the 2021 divorce cases were from marriages that were solemnised by civil rites and 7 891 (43,3%) by religious rites. About 67,1% of divorces from

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<sup>4</sup> The crude divorce rate refers to the number of divorces per 100 000 persons in the population.

the white population group and 65,5% 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, 67,2% and 47,2% respectively.

### 3.4 Number of times married

Results presented in Table 16 on page 38 show that the 2021 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 10,5% of men and 8,3% of women from second-time marriages. Less than 2% of men and women were getting divorced for at least three times.

### 3.5 Age at the time of divorce

The median age at the time of divorce in 2021 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 16). The pattern of median ages in 2021 by population group showed that black African males had the highest median age of 46 years, while whites, coloured and Indian/Asian population groups recorded the median ages of 45 years, 43 years and 42 years respectively. The difference in the median ages at the time of divorce between males and females was greater in the black African population group (five years) compared to the white population with three years and two years for coloured and Indian/Asian population groups.

Detailed information on the age and population group of divorcees is presented in Figure 11 on page 17 for males and in Figure 12 on page 17 for females, as well as in Tables 17 and 18 on pages 39 and 40 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. For males, the peak age group for black African was for those aged 45 to 49 years (1 888) followed by those aged 40 to 44 years (1 874). The peak age group for coloured, Indian/Asian and white population groups was 35 to 39 years (see Figure 11). In the case of females, the peak age group at divorce was 35 to 39 years for black African, coloured, Indian/Asian and white population groups (see Figure 12).

### 3.6 Duration of marriage of divorcing couples and population group

Statistics from the annual divorce data do not give a comprehensive picture of the number of marriages ending in divorce. However, there is data on the duration of marriages for divorces granted in 2021. Table 19 and Table 20 show that the largest number [4 836 (26,6%)] of divorces were for marriages that lasted between five and nine years. This group is followed by marriages that lasted between 10 and 14 years [3 877 (21,3%)] and marriages that lasted for less than five years [2 909 (16,0%)]. Results showed that four in ten divorces 7 745 (42,5%) of the 18 208 in 2021 were marriages that lasted for less than 10 years.

Population group variations showed that 28,1% of divorces from the black African; 26,1% from coloured, 24,6% from white and 20,9% from Indian/Asian population groups were from marriages that lasted between five and nine years as indicated on Figure 13 on page 18. The white population had the highest proportion (19,4%) 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 generally higher than the other population groups for marriages that did not last for 15 years and more.

### 3.7 Divorces involving couples with children younger than 18 years

In 2021, 10 308 (56,6%) of the 18 208 divorces had children younger than 18 years whereas 7 900 (43,4%) divorces had no children (see Table 21 on page 43). The profile of white divorcees showed that more than half of

the recorded divorces were without children (56,2%). Looking at the black African and coloured divorcees, divorces involving couples with children constituted about 62,0% and 60,9% respectively. Table 22 on page 43 shows that 55,6% of children affected by divorce were from the black African population group; 19,4% from the white population group; 14,9% from the Indian/Asian population group and 4,3% from the coloured population group.

#### **4. Summary and concluding remarks**

This statistical release provides information on civil and customary marriages, civil unions and divorces for 2021, 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.

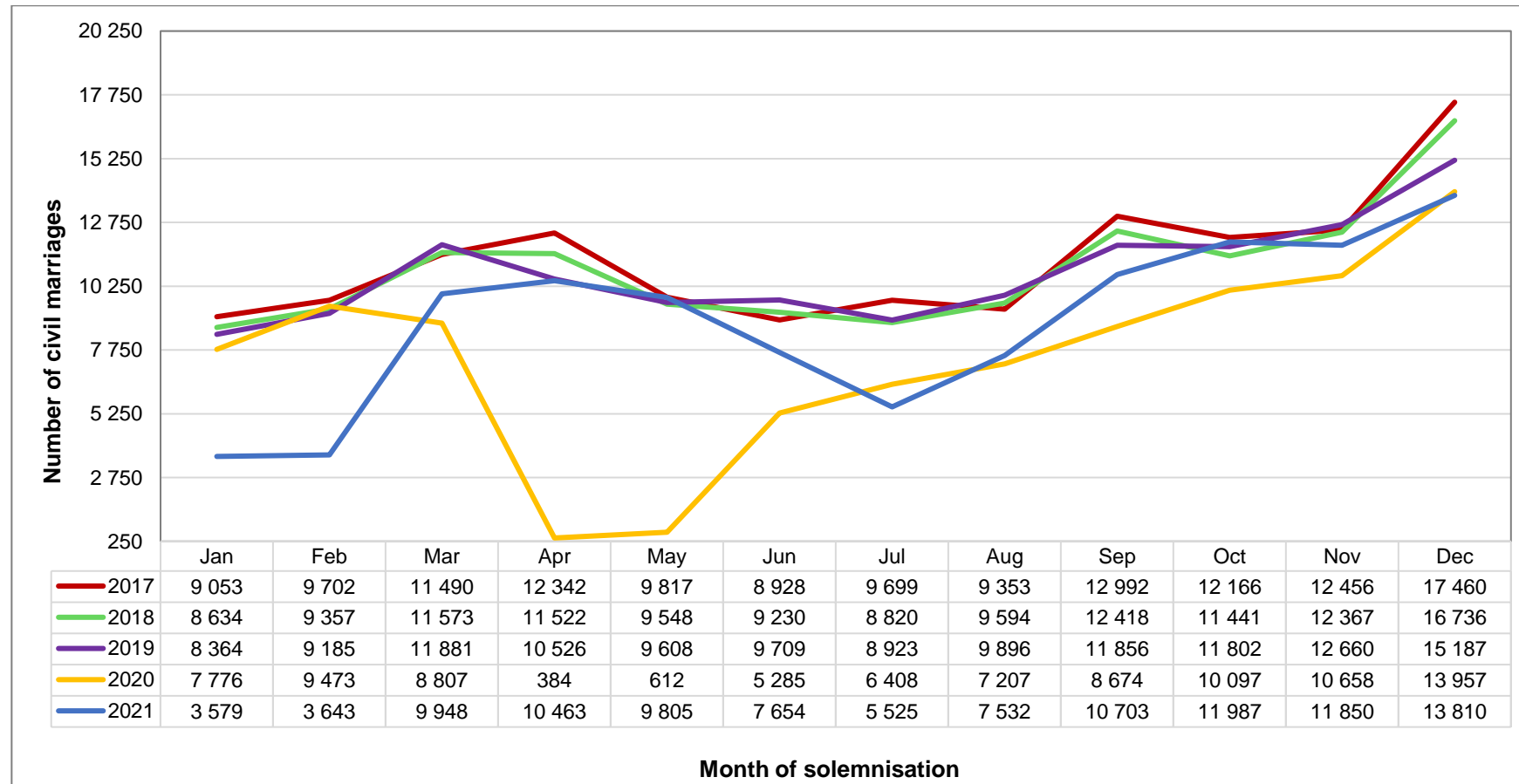
In total, 106 499 civil marriages were registered in South Africa in 2021, with more than half 59 027 (55,4%) being solemnised by DHA marriage officers. The highest number of civil marriages was registered in Gauteng (26 522), followed by KwaZulu-Natal (17 253) and Western Cape (16 150), and the lowest was registered in Northern Cape (3 198). The majority of civil marriages in 2021 for both bridegrooms (86 269) and brides (91 776) were first time marriages, with women generally entering into marriage at younger ages than men do.

The number of registered customary marriages was 2 676 in 2021, which increased by 68,8% from a total of 1 585 recorded in 2020. The majority of bridegrooms [2 333 (87,2%)] 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 2021 was 2 240, most of which were registered in Gauteng (1 193) and Western Cape (553), and lowest in Northern Cape (20) and Limpopo (16).

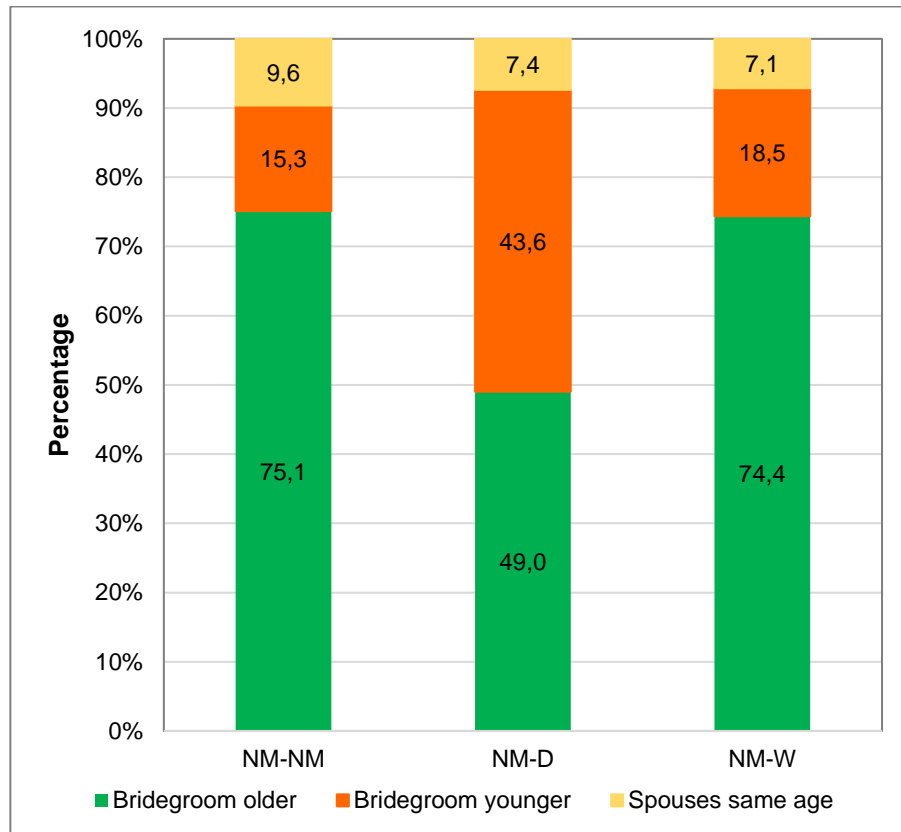
With regard to divorces, the data showed that 18 208 divorces were granted in 2021. Generally, there was an increase in the proportion of divorces for black Africans and a decline for the white population group. Divorces were mainly from people who had married for the first time. There were more wives than husbands who filed the divorce, with husbands generally getting divorced at a later age than wives. The provincial distribution shows that Gauteng (4 859), Western Cape (3 833), KwaZulu-Natal (2 851) and Eastern Cape (2 138) were the provinces with the highest number of divorces granted. In 2021, about 17 345 children aged less than 18 years were affected by divorces that took place.

Overall, the information provided in this release showed a decreasing trend in the number of registered civil marriages except for a slight increase in 2016, fluctuating trend on customary marriages and an increasing trend on civil unions except in 2020. The number of divorces granted showed an increase from 2012 to 2017 then a decrease till 2020 and an increase in 2021. 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, 2017 – 2021**



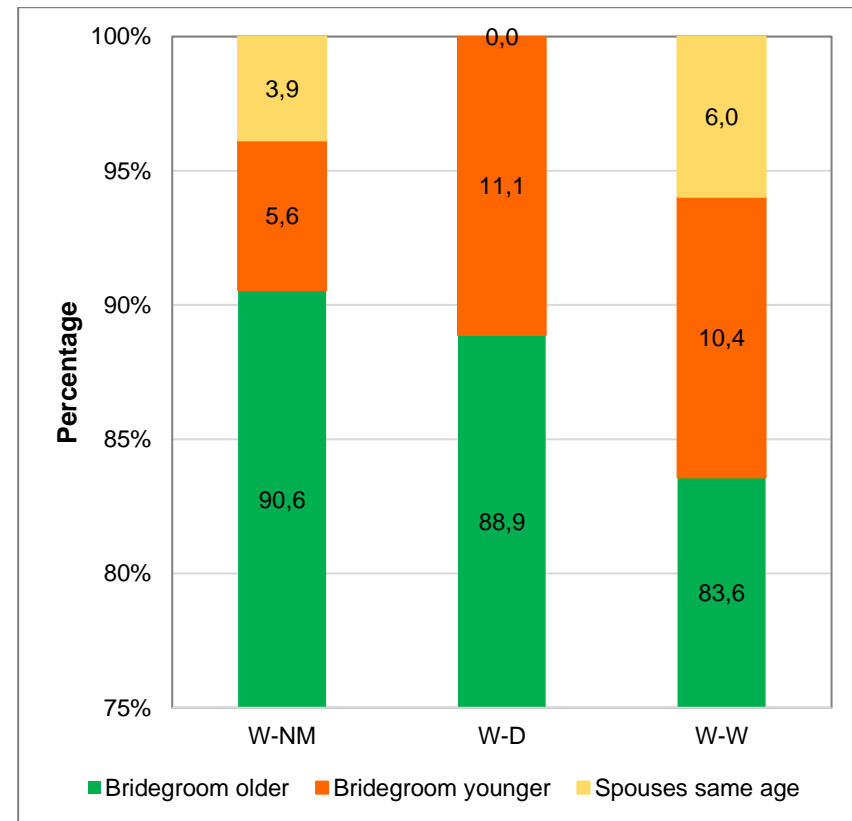
**Figure 2a – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (never married men), 2021**



\*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

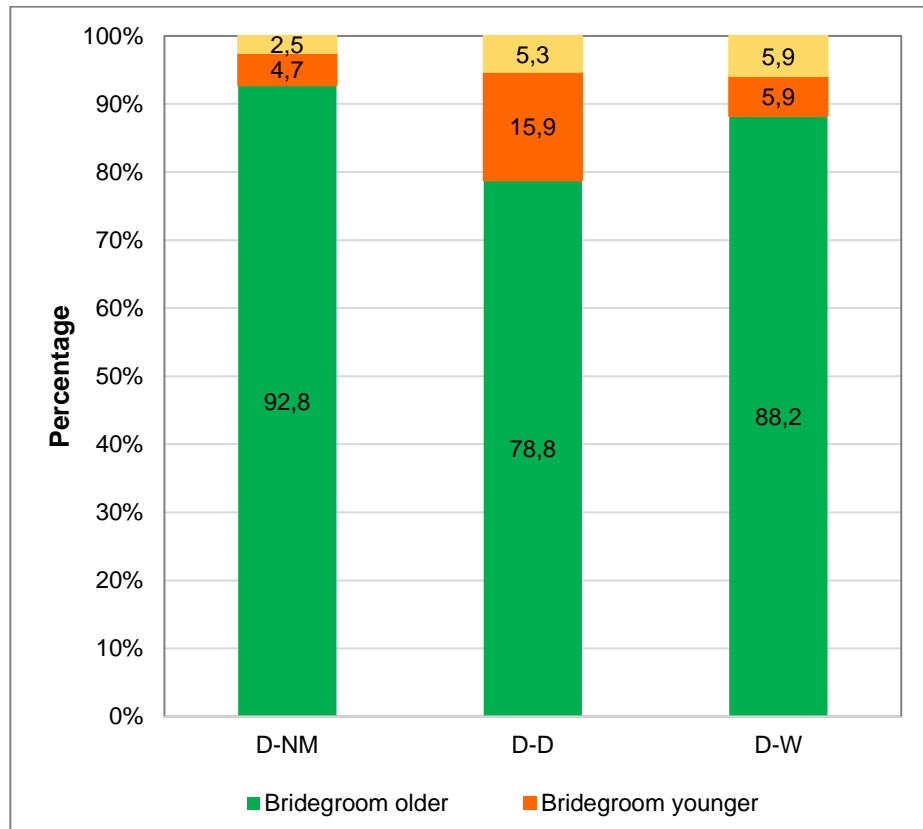
**Figure 2b – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (widowers), 2021**



\*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

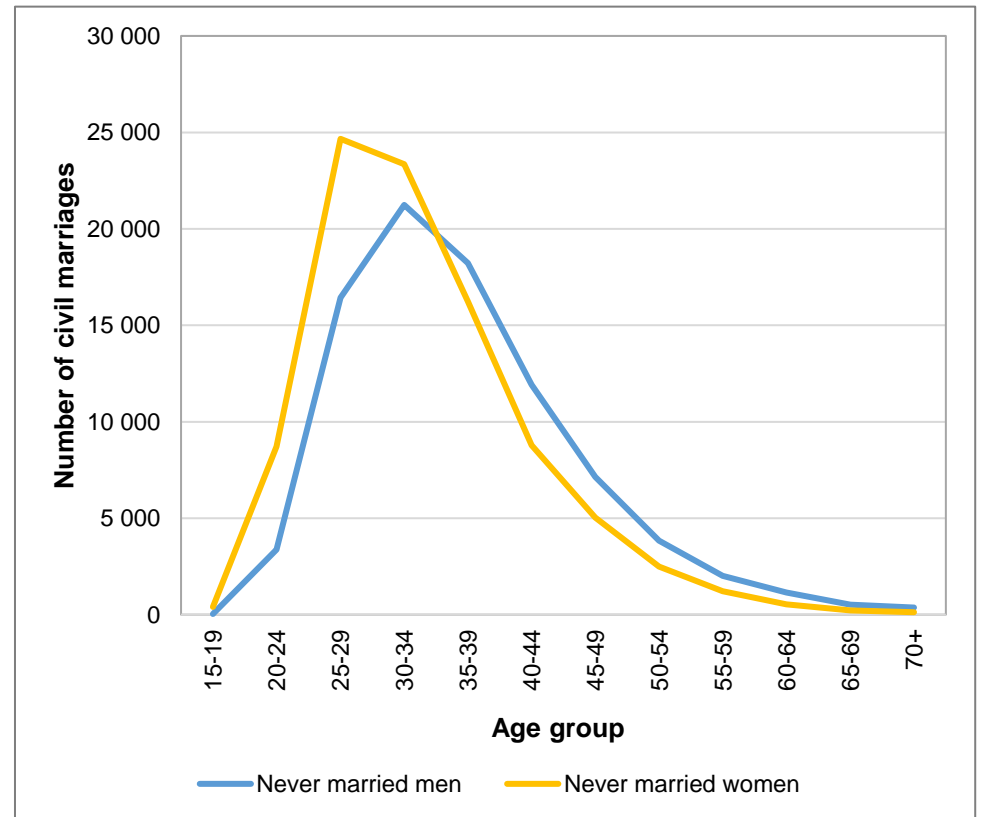
**Figure 2c – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (male divorcees, 2021)**



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

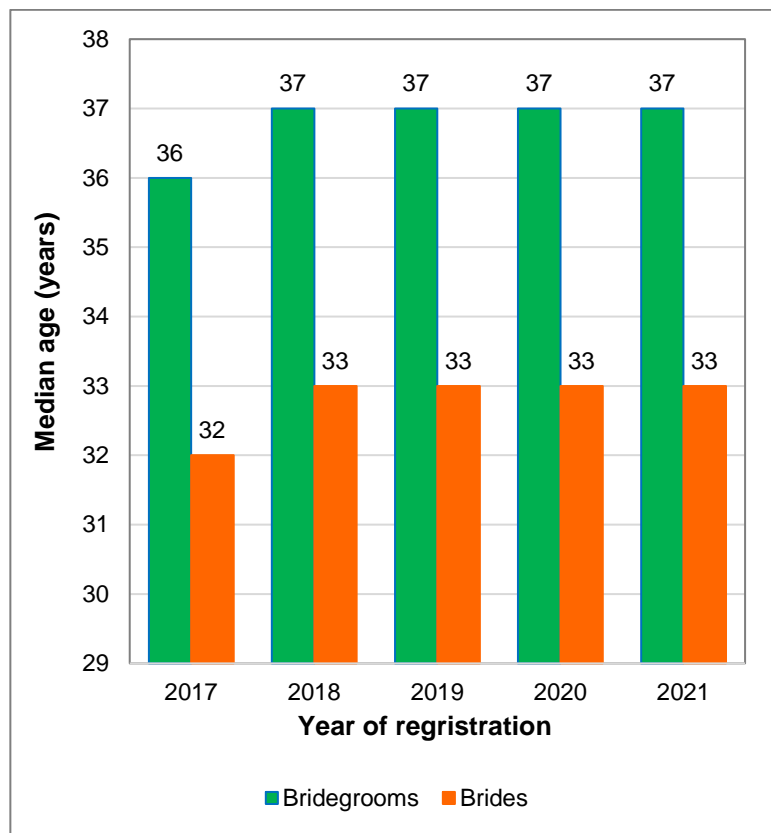
D – NM = Divorcee to Never married women  
 D – D = Divorcee to Divorcee  
 D – W = Divorcee to Widow

**Figure 3 – Number of civil marriages for never married men and between and women by age group, 2021**

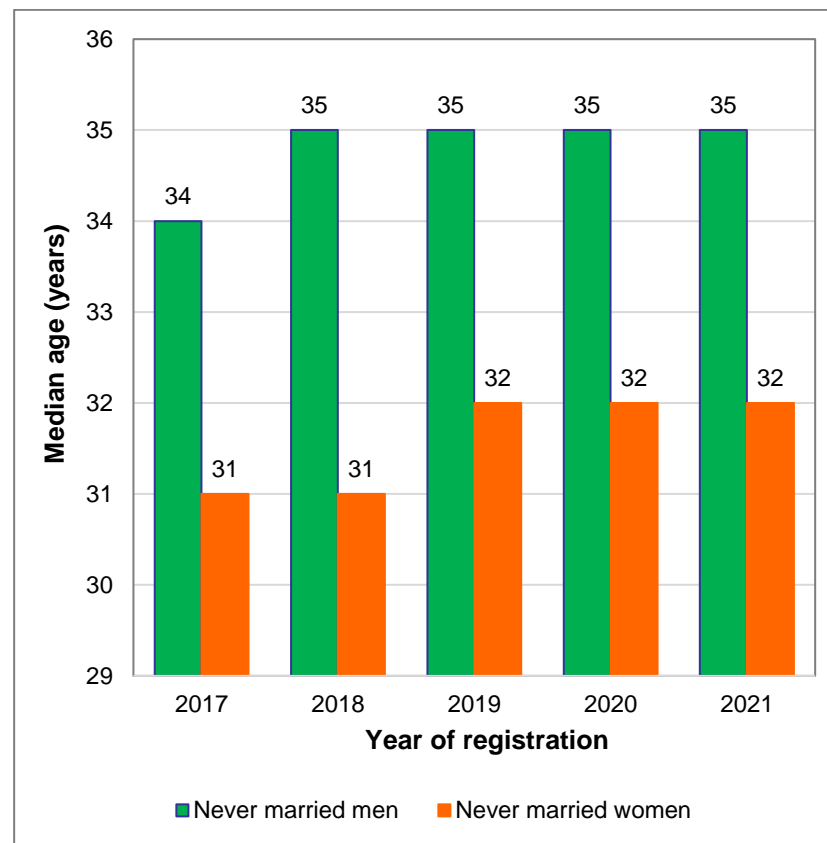




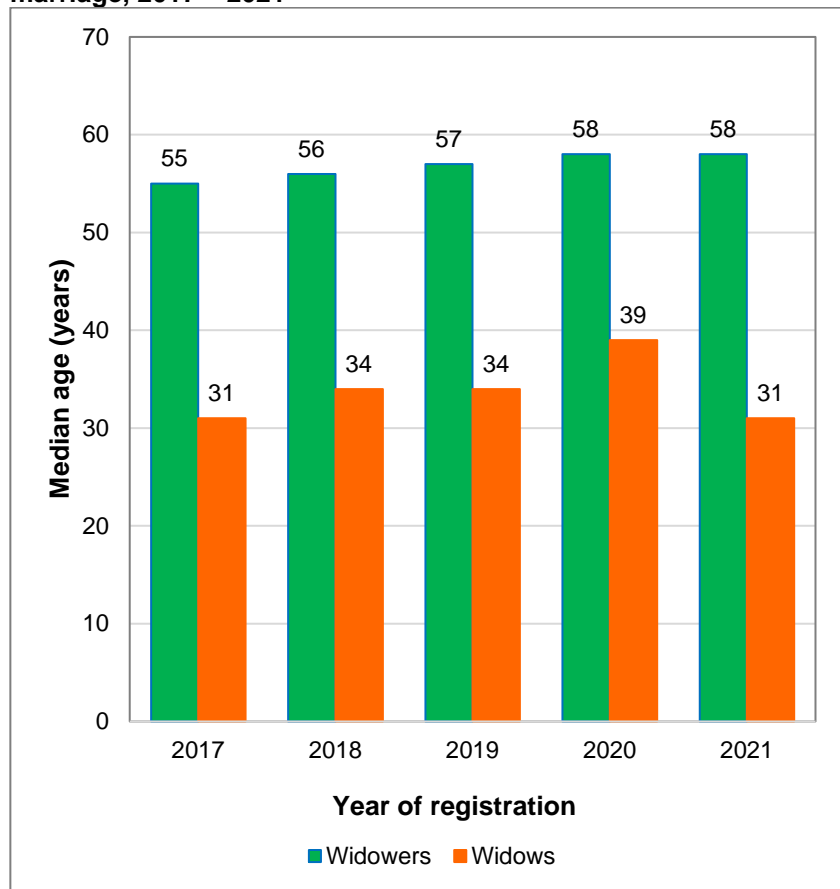
**Figure 4a – Median age of bridegrooms and brides at the time of civil marriage, 2017 – 2021**



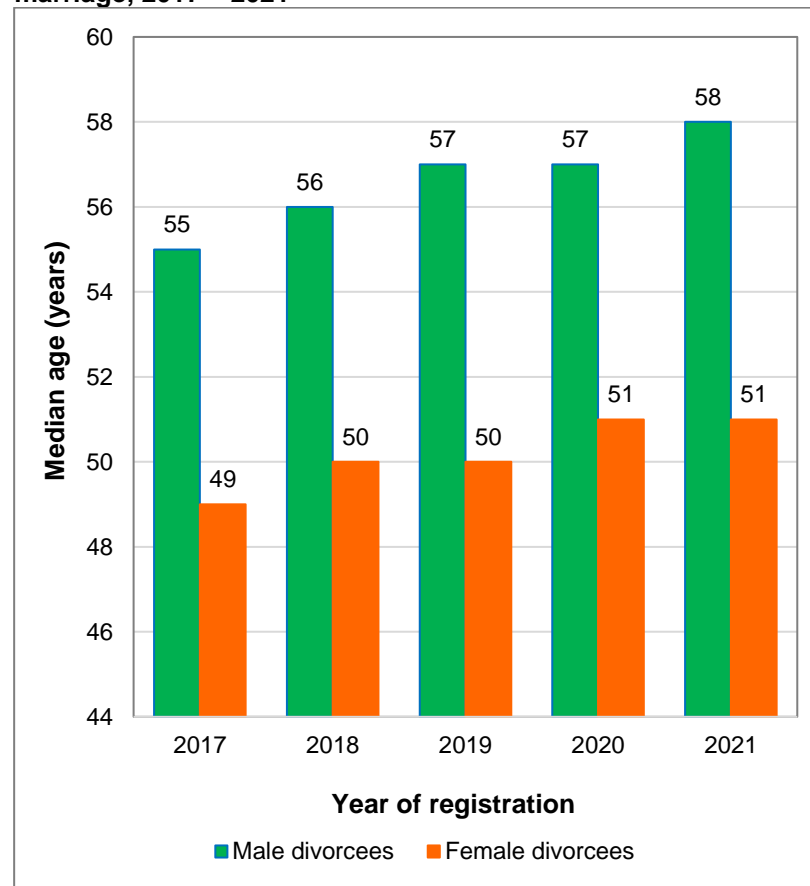
**Figure 4b – Median age of never married men and women at the time of civil marriage, 2017 – 2021**



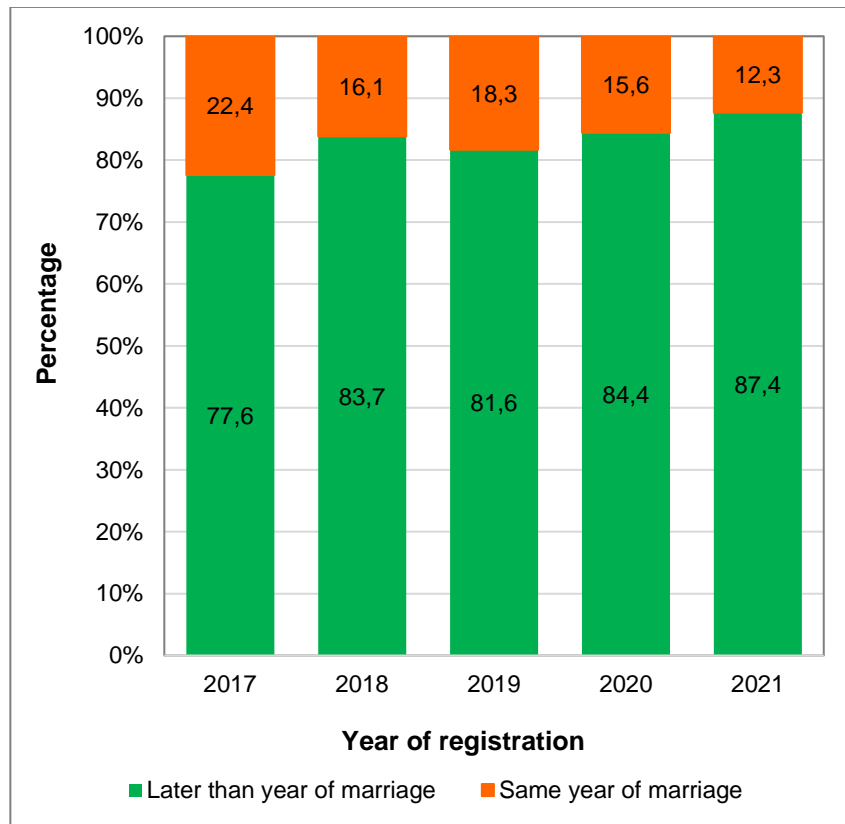
**Figure 4c – Median age of widowers and widows at the time of civil marriage, 2017 – 2021**



**Figure 4d – Median age of male and female divorcees at the time of civil marriage, 2017 – 2021**

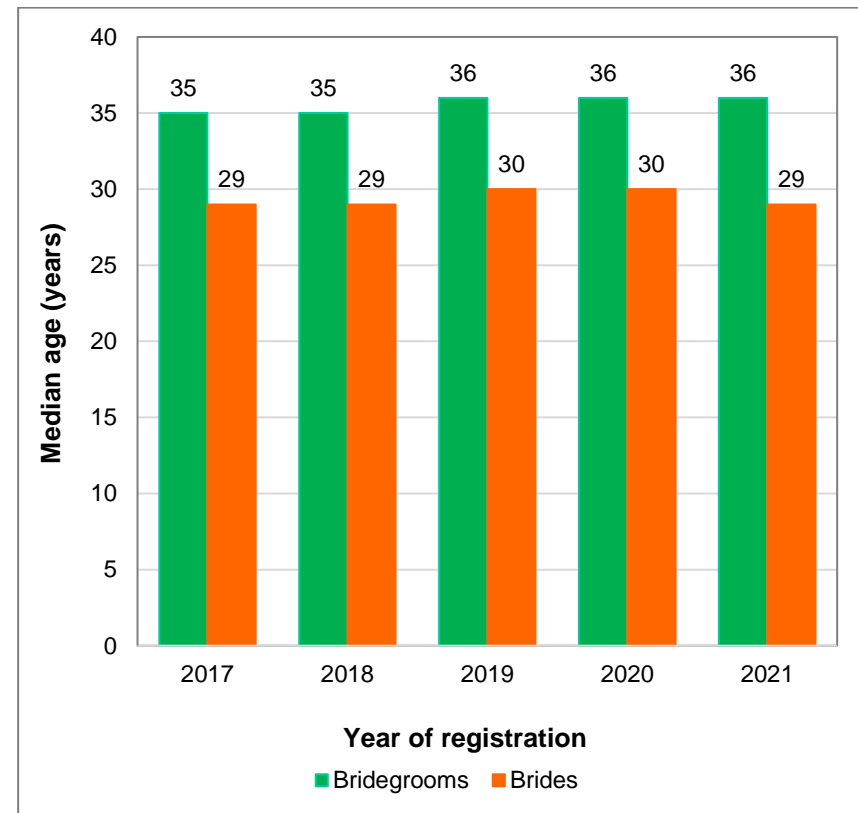


**Figure 5 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by year of marriage and time it took to register the marriage, 2017 – 2021**

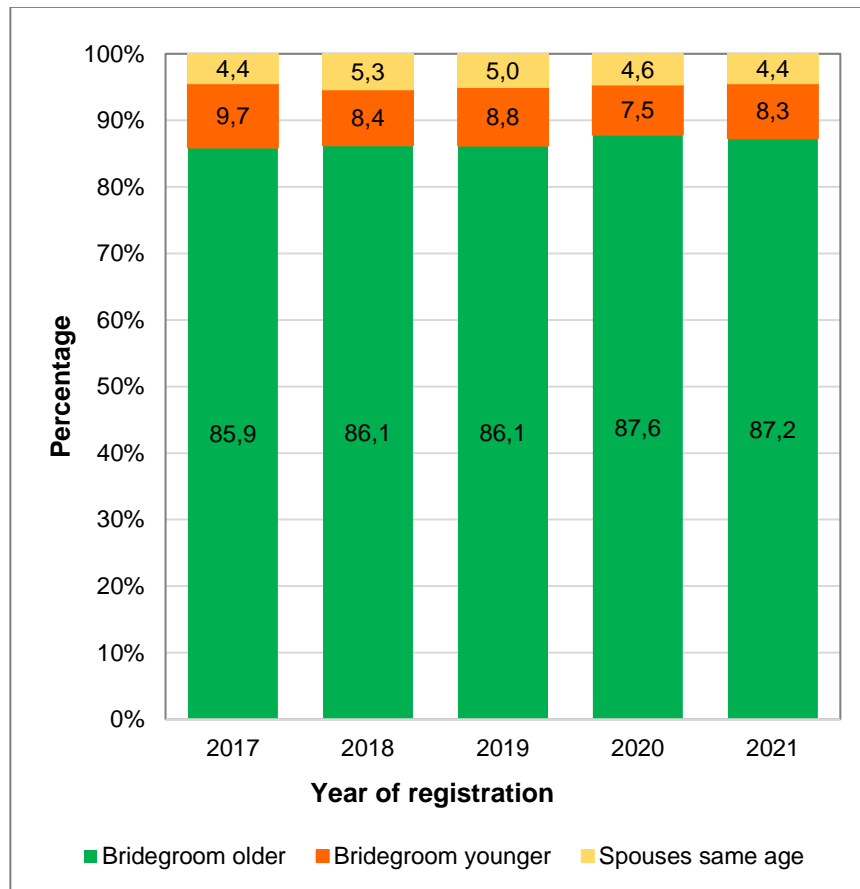


\*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding off.

**Figure 6 – Median age of bridegrooms and brides at the time of customary marriage, 2017 – 2021**

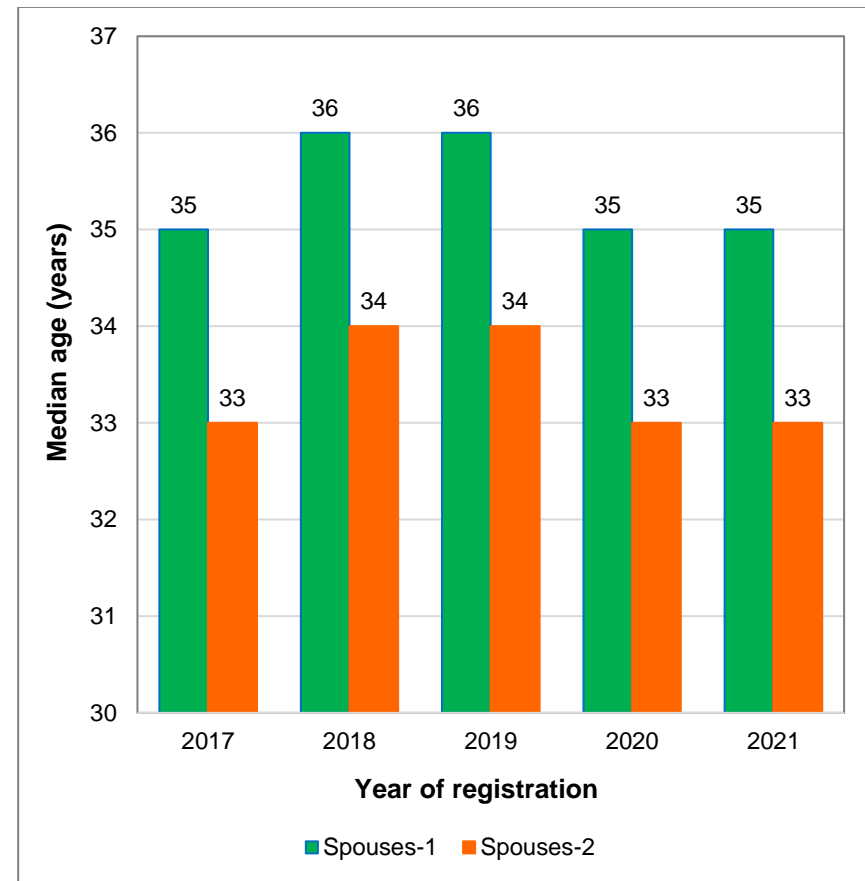


**Figure 7 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage, 2017 – 2021**

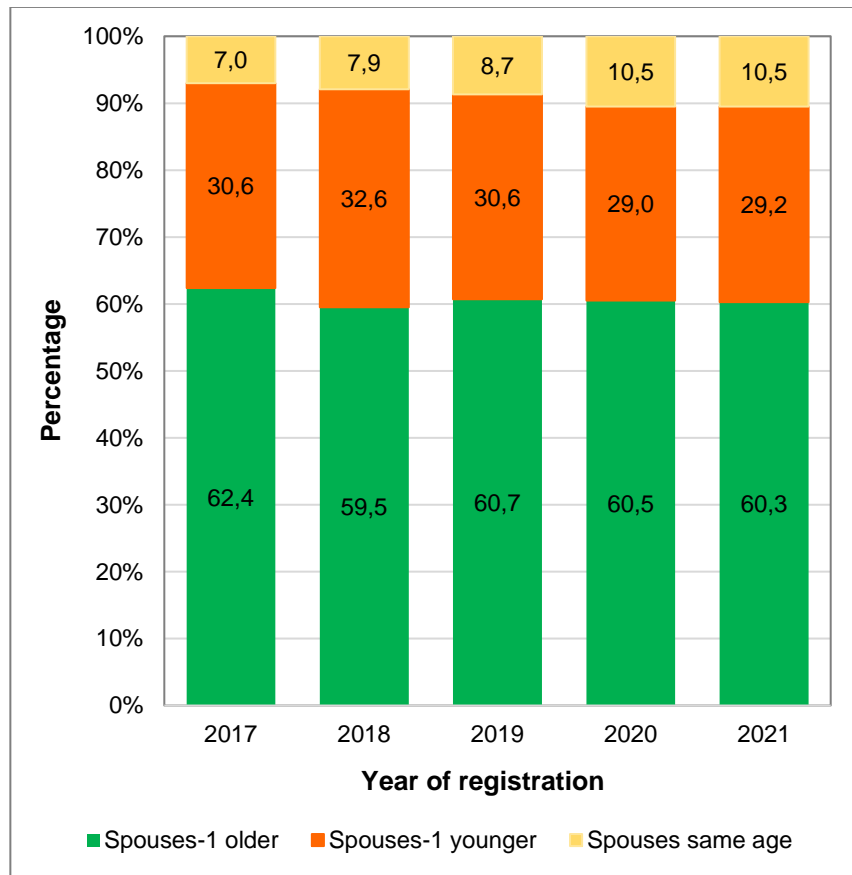


Excluding less percentages between 0,1% to 0,2% of unspecified age difference Between 2018 and 2021

**Figure 8 – Median age of spouses in civil unions, 2017 – 2021**

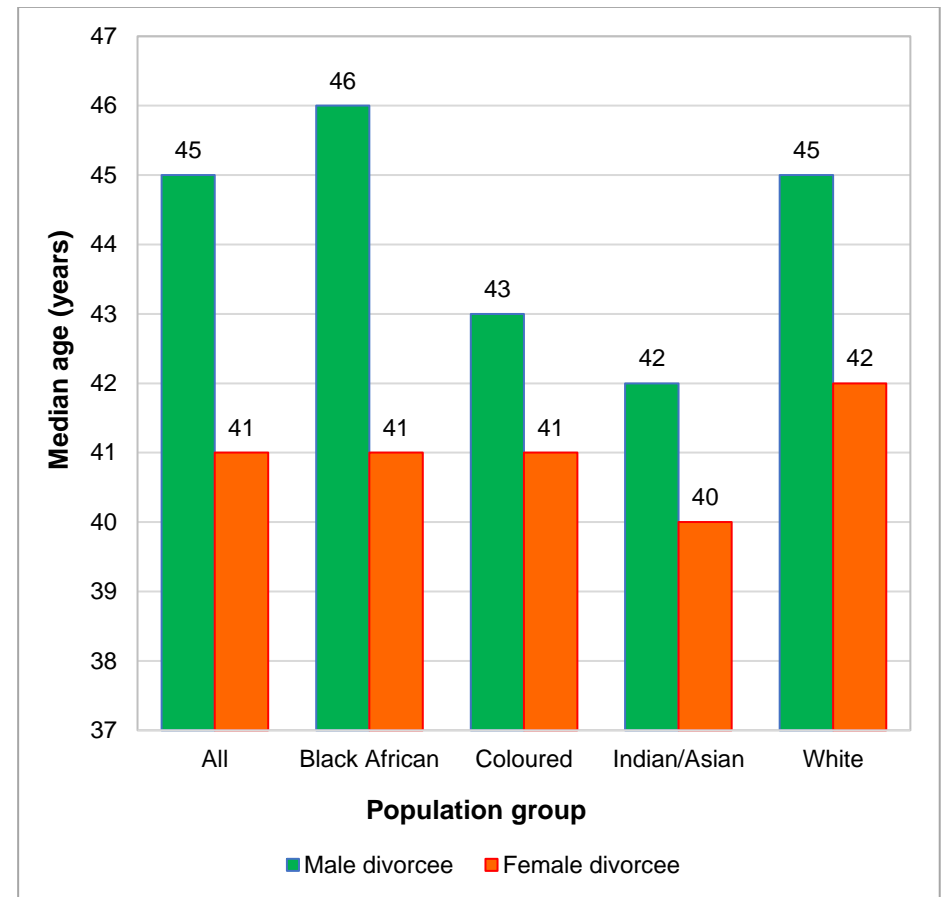


**Figure 9 – Percentage distribution of civil unions by age differences between spouses at the time of union, 2017 – 2021**

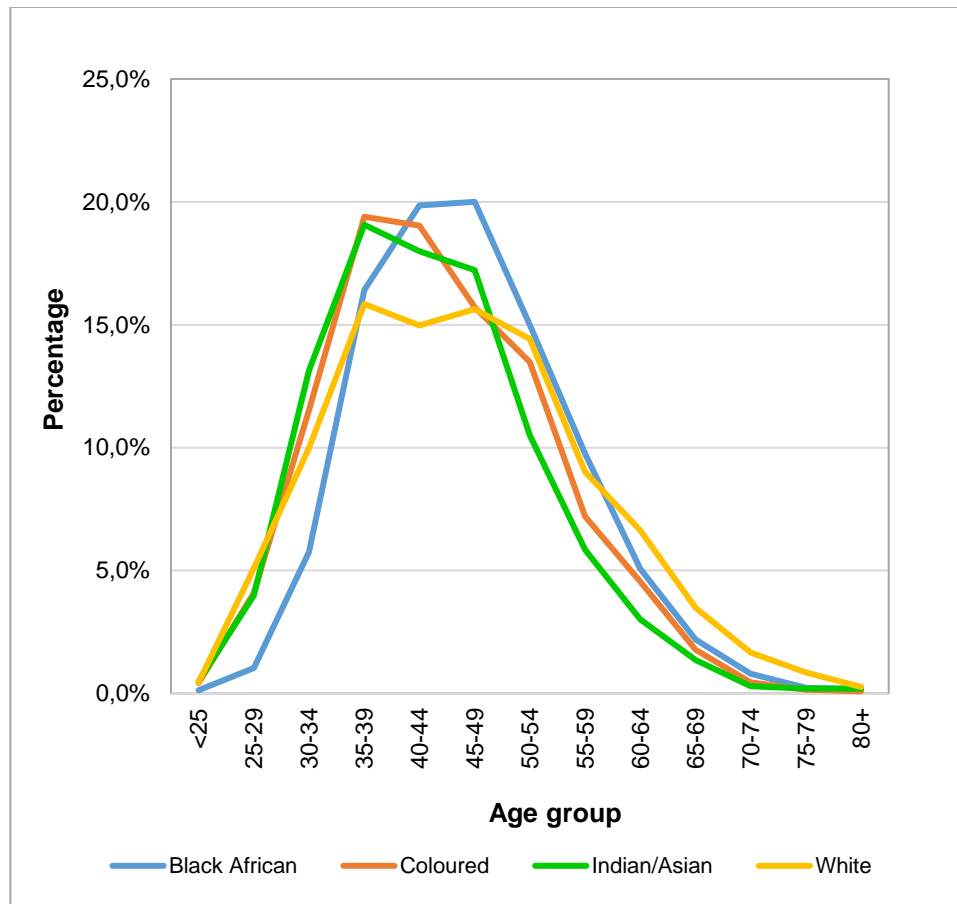


\*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding off.

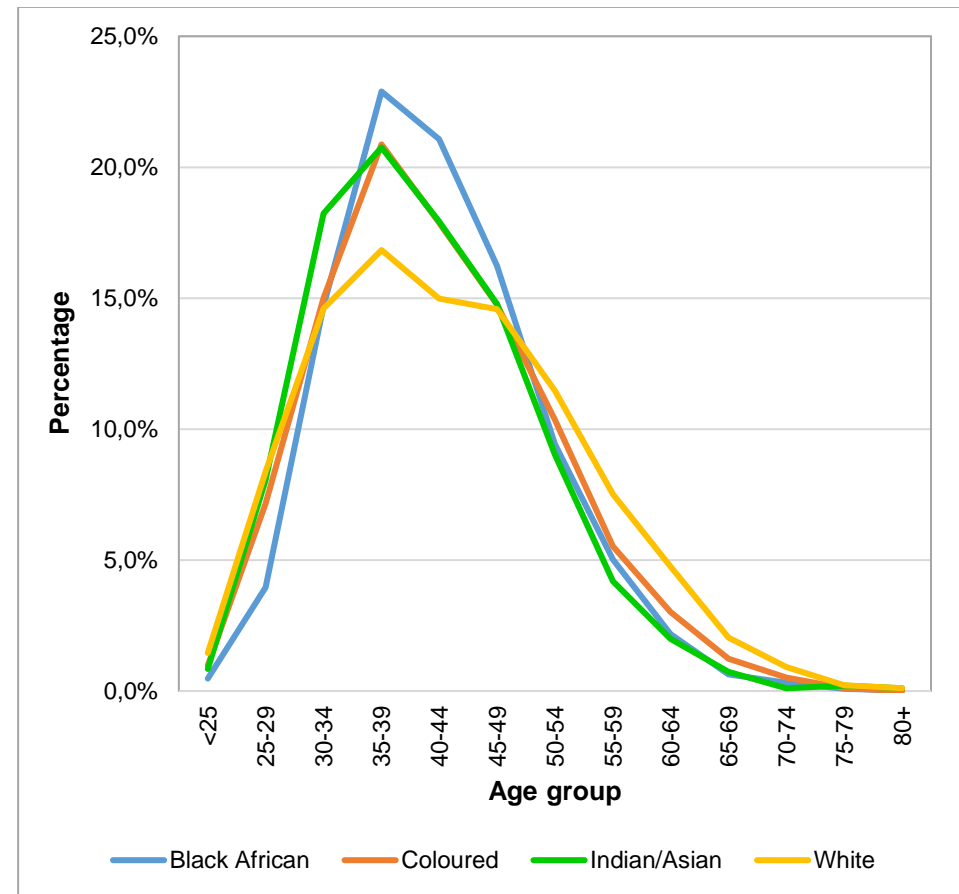
**Figure 10 – Median age of divorcees by sex and population group, 2021**



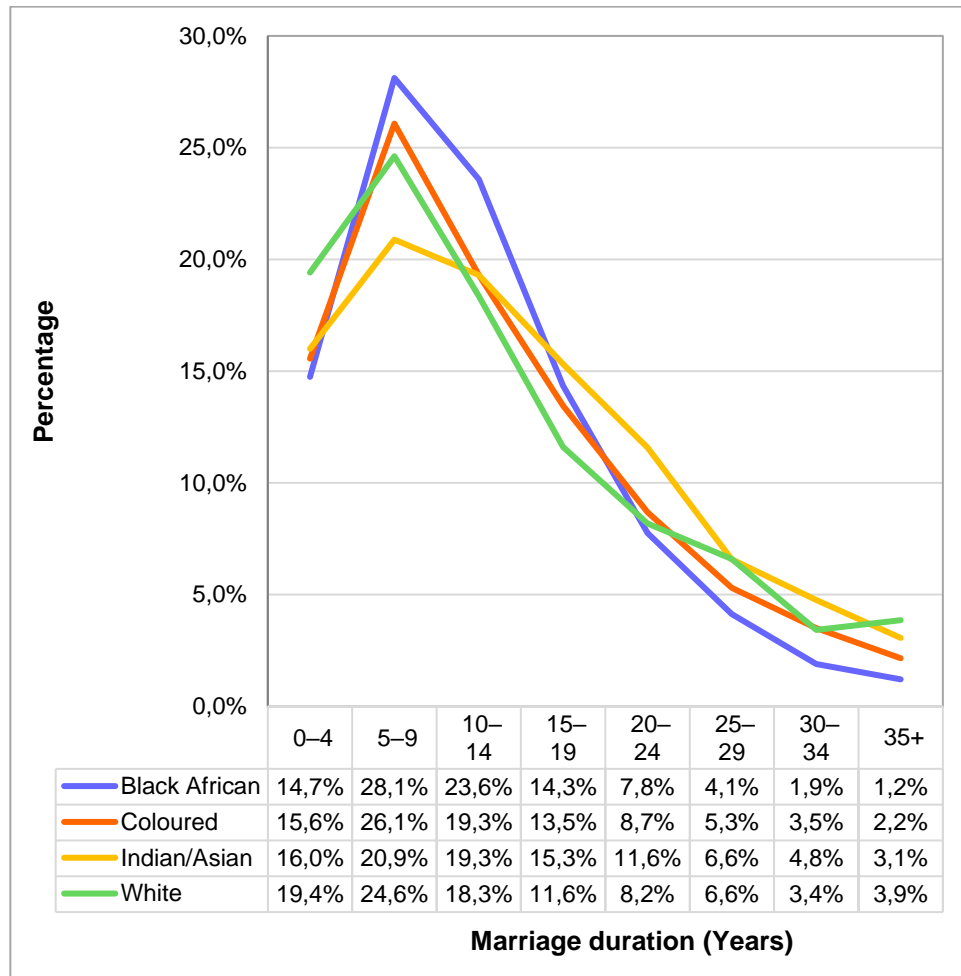
**Figure 11 – The proportions of divorces by age group and population group (males), 2021**



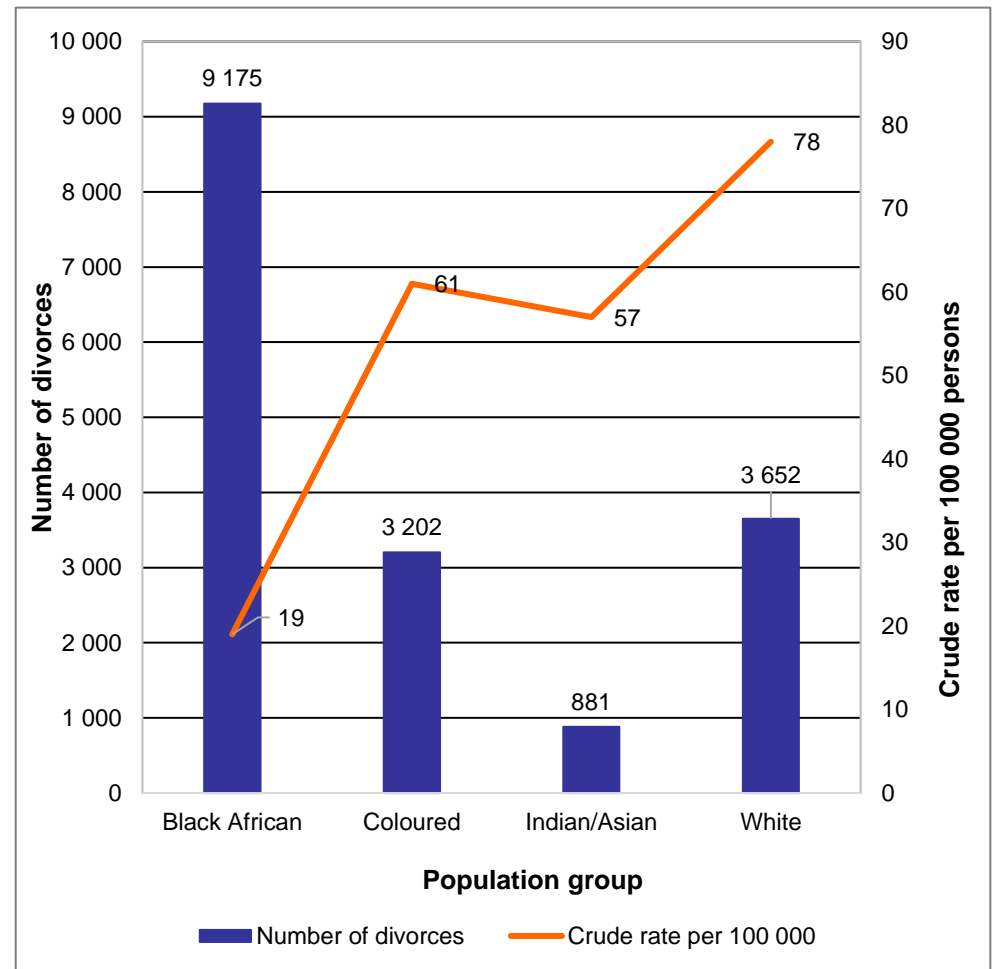
**Figure 12 – The proportions of divorces by age group and population group (females), 2021**



**Figure 13 – The proportion of divorces by duration of marriage and population group, 2021**



**Figure 14 – Number of divorces and crude divorce rates by population group, 2021**



**Table 1 – Number of registered civil marriages in South Africa, 2012 – 2021**

<b>Year of registration</b>	<b>Number of civil marriages</b>
<b>2012</b>	161 112
<b>2013</b>	158 642
<b>2014</b>	150 852
<b>2015</b>	138 627
<b>2016</b>	139 512
<b>2017</b>	135 458
<b>2018</b>	131 240
<b>2019</b>	129 597
<b>2020</b>	89 338
<b>2021</b>	106 499



**Table 2 – Number and percentage distribution of civil marriages by province of marriage registration and way of solemnisation, 2021**

Province of registration	Grand Total	Way of solemnisation			%			
		DHA	Religious	Unspecified	Total	DHA	Religious	Unspecified
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>106 499</b>	<b>59 027</b>	<b>35 371</b>	<b>12 101</b>	<b>100,0</b>	55,4	33,2	11,4
Western Cape	16 150	7 913	7 975	262	<b>100,0</b>	49,0	49,4	1,6
Eastern Cape	10 548	6 100	3 378	1 070	<b>100,0</b>	57,8	32,0	10,1
Northern Cape	3 198	1 354	949	895	<b>100,0</b>	42,3	29,7	28,0
Free State	6 778	5 274	1 389	115	<b>100,0</b>	77,8	20,5	1,7
KwaZulu-Natal	17 253	10 209	5 131	1 913	<b>100,0</b>	59,2	29,7	11,1
North West	7 374	4 377	2 723	274	<b>100,0</b>	59,4	36,9	3,7
Gauteng	26 522	14 743	7 180	4 599	<b>100,0</b>	55,6	27,1	17,3
Mpumalanga	5 286	2 059	1 314	1 913	<b>100,0</b>	39,0	24,9	36,2
Limpopo	6 760	4 770	956	1 034	<b>100,0</b>	70,6	14,1	15,3
Outside RSA	300	293	5	2	<b>100,0</b>	97,7	1,7	0,7
Unknown	24	6	10	8	<b>100,0</b>	25,0	41,7	33,3
Unspecified	6 306	1 929	4 361	16	<b>100,0</b>	30,6	69,2	0,3

**Table 3 – Number of civil marriages by province of registration and marital status of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2021**

Province of registration	Bridegroom					Bride				
	Total	Never married men	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never married women	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>106 499</b>	<b>86 269</b>	<b>4 047</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>15 610</b>	<b>106 499</b>	<b>91 776</b>	<b>2 625</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>11 759</b>
Western Cape	16 150	12 808	644	18	2 680	16 150	13 535	472	6	2 137
Eastern Cape	10 548	8 480	492	29	1 547	10 548	9 107	274	18	1 149
Northern Cape	3 198	2 624	146	5	423	3 198	2 789	110	1	298
Free State	6 778	5 409	303	35	1 031	6 778	5 772	225	41	740
KwaZulu-Natal	17 253	14 403	605	132	2 113	17 253	15 375	317	61	1 500
North West	7 374	6 072	340	14	948	7 374	6 532	198	5	639
Gauteng	26 522	21 173	860	158	4 331	26 522	22 354	628	98	3 442
Mpumalanga	5 286	4 349	210	48	679	5 286	4 599	128	24	535
Limpopo	6 760	5 702	237	86	735	6 760	6 198	98	43	421
Outside RSA	300	248	5	-	47	300	265	5	-	30
Unknown	24	22	-	-	2	24	23	-	1	-
Unspecified	6 306	4 979	205	48	1 074	6 306	5 227	170	41	868

**Table 4 – Number of civil marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage and marital status of husband, 2021**

Age differences	Grand Total	Never Married					Divorcee				
		Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>106 499</b>	<b>86 269</b>	<b>81 285</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>3 893</b>	<b>4 047</b>	<b>2 253</b>	<b>740</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1 037</b>
Bridegroom Older	<b>80 138</b>	63 444	61 041	418	177	1 808	3 531	2 090	583	15	843
Bridegroom Younger	<b>17 195</b>	14 598	12 416	372	44	1 766	374	107	118	1	148
Same Age	<b>9 166</b>	8 227	7 828	63	17	319	142	56	39	1	46

Age differences	Widower					Unspecified				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>15 610</b>	<b>7 772</b>	<b>1 014</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6 807</b>
Bridegroom Older	512	422	16	56	18	12 651	6 906	672	12	5 061
Bridegroom Younger	38	26	2	7	3	2 185	601	275	4	1 305
Same Age	23	18	-	4	1	774	265	67	1	441

**Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2021**

Age	Bridegroom					Bride				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>106 499</b>	<b>86 269</b>	<b>4 047</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>15 610</b>	<b>106 499</b>	<b>91 776</b>	<b>2 625</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>11 759</b>
<b>&lt;18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>
18	9	7	1	1	-	98	92	1	5	-
19	25	24	-	1	-	282	277	-	3	2
<b>18-19</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>
20	113	111	-	2	-	552	540	-	11	1
21	258	256	-	2	-	1 006	988	3	15	-
22	537	533	1	2	1	1 562	1 538	3	16	5
23	964	954	1	7	2	2 383	2 353	4	21	5
24	1 538	1 524	2	10	2	3 324	3 291	2	18	13
<b>20-24</b>	<b>3 410</b>	<b>3 378</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8 827</b>	<b>8 710</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>24</b>
25	2 264	2 243	-	17	4	4 302	4 247	3	20	32
26	2 926	2 902	-	8	16	4 786	4 715	7	13	51
27	3 399	3 368	-	9	22	4 994	4 919	4	11	60
28	3 921	3 868	3	15	35	5 493	5 369	10	14	100
29	4 131	4 057	2	12	60	5 595	5 416	12	10	157
<b>25-29</b>	<b>16 641</b>	<b>16 438</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>25 170</b>	<b>24 666</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>400</b>
30	4 495	4 387	5	9	94	5 576	5 353	9	5	209
31	4 607	4 471	5	9	122	5 385	5 135	22	10	218
32	4 556	4 389	7	8	152	4 974	4 671	26	7	270
33	4 275	4 080	10	8	177	4 630	4 298	28	2	302
34	4 173	3 914	17	6	236	4 270	3 902	27	3	338
<b>30-34</b>	<b>22 106</b>	<b>21 241</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>781</b>	<b>24 835</b>	<b>23 359</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1 337</b>

**Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2021 (continued)**

Age	Bridegroom					Bride				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
35	4 185	3 861	15	7	302	4 189	3 791	34	3	361
36	4 323	3 942	24	4	353	4 099	3 603	48	2	446
37	4 087	3 695	20	5	367	3 751	3 223	58	1	469
38	3 908	3 402	36	4	466	3 497	2 948	62	4	483
39	3 869	3 329	38	3	499	3 199	2 674	53	1	471
<b>35-39</b>	<b>20 372</b>	<b>18 229</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1 987</b>	<b>18 735</b>	<b>16 239</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2 230</b>
40	3 380	2 829	39	2	510	2 845	2 318	54	1	472
41	3 211	2 677	41	1	492	2 433	1 929	68	-	436
42	2 984	2 407	70	-	507	2 258	1 731	71	-	456
43	2 662	2 072	61	-	529	1 971	1 440	62	1	468
44	2 574	1 928	72	2	572	1 871	1 366	68	-	437
<b>40-44</b>	<b>14 811</b>	<b>11 913</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2 610</b>	<b>11 378</b>	<b>8 784</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2 269</b>
45	2 381	1 715	56	1	609	1 738	1 199	63	-	476
46	2 273	1 596	91	1	585	1 652	1 136	77	-	439
47	2 149	1 434	100		615	1 565	1 006	96	-	463
48	2 021	1 251	117		653	1 405	895	91	-	419
49	1 969	1 150	149	1	669	1 333	801	109	-	423
<b>45-49</b>	<b>10 793</b>	<b>7 146</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3 131</b>	<b>7 693</b>	<b>5 037</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2 220</b>
50	1 651	914	94	-	643	1 109	617	101	-	391
51	1 699	978	119	1	601	1 066	572	98	-	396
52	1 418	748	119	4	547	911	519	77	1	314
53	1 349	650	139	13	547	813	463	67	8	275
54	1 165	549	126	20	470	659	322	77	6	254
<b>50-54</b>	<b>7 282</b>	<b>3 839</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>2 808</b>	<b>4 558</b>	<b>2 493</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1 630</b>

**Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2021 (concluded)**

Age	Bridegroom					Bride				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
55	1 088	486	127	19	456	610	297	79	5	229
56	1 088	443	144	26	475	587	281	86	8	212
57	991	382	167	24	418	525	246	62	10	207
58	948	382	133	30	403	424	195	64	7	158
59	899	322	167	24	386	424	194	68	12	150
<b>55-59</b>	<b>5 014</b>	<b>2 015</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>2 138</b>	<b>2 570</b>	<b>1 213</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>956</b>
60	746	269	136	29	312	311	144	50	17	100
61	752	278	149	37	288	308	134	62	12	100
62	586	207	134	26	219	226	87	51	10	78
63	582	231	123	25	203	228	89	55	8	76
64	432	162	98	27	145	205	78	55	9	63
<b>60-64</b>	<b>3 098</b>	<b>1 147</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>1 167</b>	<b>1 278</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>417</b>
65	394	123	108	17	146	179	63	52	9	55
66	312	101	94	11	106	140	52	39	2	47
67	342	113	109	14	106	118	41	49	3	25
68	277	94	83	6	94	100	34	37	3	26
69	258	84	92	15	67	75	27	28	3	17
<b>65-69</b>	<b>1 583</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>70+</b>	<b>1 350</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>104</b>

**Table 6 – Number of registered customary marriages in South Africa, 2012 – 2021**

<b>Year of registration</b>	<b>Number of marriages</b>
2012	4 555
2013	3 498
2014	3 062
2015	3 467
2016	3 978
2017	2 588
2018	3 160
2019	2 789
2020	1 585
2021	2 676

**Table 7 – Number and percentage distribution of customary marriages by province of marriage registration and age difference, 2021**

Province of registration	Number					%				
	Total	Bridegroom older	Bridegroom younger	Same age	Unspecified	Total	Bridegroom older	Bridegroom younger	Same age	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 676</b>	<b>2 333</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100,0</b>	87,2	8,3	4,3	0,2
<b>Western Cape</b>	8	6	2	-	-	<b>100,0</b>	75,0	25,0	0,0	0,0
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	350	309	32	8	1	<b>100,0</b>	88,3	9,1	2,3	0,3
<b>Northern Cape</b>	13	12	-	1	-	<b>100,0</b>	92,3	0,0	7,7	0,0
<b>Free State</b>	71	62	7	2	-	<b>100,0</b>	87,3	9,9	2,8	0,0
<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	749	634	68	45	2	<b>100,0</b>	84,6	9,1	6,0	0,3
<b>North West</b>	69	60	4	4	1	<b>100,0</b>	87,0	5,8	5,8	1,4
<b>Gauteng</b>	243	211	22	10	-	<b>100,0</b>	86,8	9,1	4,1	0,0
<b>Mpumalanga</b>	380	325	39	15	1	<b>100,0</b>	85,5	10,3	3,9	0,3
<b>Limpopo</b>	714	646	42	26	-	<b>100,0</b>	90,5	5,9	3,6	0,0
<b>Outside RSA</b>	4	3	-	-	1	<b>100,0</b>	75,0	0,0	0,0	25,0
<b>Unknown</b>	70	60	6	4	-	<b>100,0</b>	85,7	8,6	5,7	0,0
<b>Unspecified</b>	5	5	-	-	-	<b>100,0</b>	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, 2021**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Bridegrooms</b>	<b>Brides</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 676</b>	<b>2 676</b>
<b>&lt;18</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>156</b>
18	10	78
19	18	92
<b>18-19</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>170</b>
20	28	84
21	50	87
22	62	84
23	72	125
24	70	96
<b>20-24</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>476</b>
25	79	111
26	80	105
27	84	115
28	82	116
29	98	118
<b>25-29</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>565</b>
30	97	98
31	95	103
32	83	86
33	103	81
34	98	60
<b>30-34</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>428</b>

**Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2021 (continued)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Bridegrooms</b>	<b>Brides</b>
35	91	65
36	68	63
37	78	75
38	91	72
39	73	67
<b>35-39</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>342</b>
40	75	42
41	62	48
42	59	41
43	73	45
44	61	36
<b>40-44</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>212</b>
45	53	38
46	52	34
47	43	34
48	47	27
49	39	25
<b>45-49</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>158</b>
50	47	23
51	37	19
52	36	17
53	45	18
54	28	12
<b>50-54</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>89</b>

**Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2021 (concluded)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Bridegrooms</b>	<b>Brides</b>
55	32	7
56	30	12
57	25	11
58	25	8
59	25	8
<b>55-59</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>46</b>
60	25	5
61	18	2
62	15	5
63	12	4
64	18	6
<b>60-64</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>22</b>
65	13	1
66	6	1
67	10	-
68	4	1
69	6	3
<b>65-69</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>70+</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Unspecified</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>

**Table 9 – Number and percentage distribution of civil unions registered by province of registration, 2017 – 2021**

Province of registration	Number					%				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1 357</b>	<b>1 650</b>	<b>1 771</b>	<b>1 471</b>	<b>2 240</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>
<b>Western Cape</b>	391	465	443	434	553	28,8	28,2	25,0	29,5	24,7
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	57	58	64	48	53	4,2	3,5	3,6	3,3	2,4
<b>Northern Cape</b>	16	20	18	6	20	1,2	1,2	1,0	0,4	0,9
<b>Free State</b>	42	46	48	32	50	3,1	2,8	2,7	2,2	2,2
<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	245	298	216	168	209	18,1	18,1	12,2	11,4	9,3
<b>North West</b>	43	40	41	22	44	3,2	2,4	2,3	1,5	2,0
<b>Gauteng</b>	507	632	779	659	1193	37,4	38,3	44,0	44,8	53,3
<b>Mpumalanga</b>	32	31	28	23	26	2,4	1,9	1,6	1,6	1,2
<b>Limpopo</b>	15	13	23	5	16	1,1	0,8	1,3	0,3	0,7
<b>Outside RSA</b>	3	2	6	-	4	0,2	0,1	0,3	-	0,2
<b>Unspecified</b>	6	45	105	74	72	0,4	2,7	5,9	5,0	3,2

**Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2021**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Spouse-1</b>	<b>Spouse-2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 240</b>	<b>2 240</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
20	3	7
21	1	16
22	15	18
23	11	31
24	30	53
<b>20-24</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>125</b>
25	35	60
26	58	89
27	75	103
28	79	122
29	116	119
<b>25-29</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>493</b>
30	139	154
31	140	131
32	134	144
33	137	105
34	115	105
<b>30-34</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>639</b>

**Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2021 (continued)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Spouse-1</b>	<b>Spouse-2</b>
35	105	92
36	84	90
37	95	83
38	80	67
39	76	47
<b>35-39</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>379</b>
40	56	56
41	49	62
42	56	37
43	50	35
44	47	31
<b>40-44</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>221</b>
45	30	36
46	30	34
47	28	31
48	29	31
49	32	20
<b>45-49</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>152</b>
50	34	25
51	22	25
52	26	30
53	23	20
54	23	15
<b>50-54</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>115</b>

**Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2021 (concluded)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Spouse-1</b>	<b>Spouse-2</b>
55	21	14
56	24	8
57	15	8
58	6	12
59	15	8
<b>55-59</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>50</b>
60	14	12
61	10	2
62	9	6
63	5	6
64	7	7
<b>60-64</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>33</b>
65	4	6
66	6	1
67	4	3
68	3	1
69	2	3
<b>65-69</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>70+</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>

**Table 11 – Number and percentage distribution of published divorces in South Africa by population group, 2012 – 2021**

Year	Total	Numbers						%						
		Black African	Coloured	India/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified	Total	Black African	Coloured	India/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified
2012	21 998	7 311	3 967	1 036	7 238	22	2 424	100,0	33,2	18,0	4,7	32,9	0,1	11,0
2013	23 885	8 656	3 888	1 425	7 561	24	2 331	100,0	36,2	16,3	6,0	31,7	0,1	9,8
2014	24 689	9 167	4 994	1 522	6 970	842	1 194	100,0	37,1	20,2	6,2	28,2	3,4	4,8
2015	25 260	10 841	4 213	1 566	6 588	837	1 215	100,0	42,9	16,7	6,2	26,1	3,3	4,8
2016	25 326	10 641	4 711	1 529	6 293	841	1 311	100,0	42,0	18,6	6,0	24,8	3,3	5,2
2017	25 390	11 309	4 517	1 401	6 048	833	1 282	100,0	44,5	17,8	5,5	23,8	3,3	5,0
2018	25 284	11 721	4 540	1 214	5 780	779	1 250	100,0	46,4	18,0	4,8	22,9	3,1	4,9
2019	23 710	10 677	4 502	1 299	5 268	816	1 148	100,0	45,0	19,0	5,5	22,2	3,4	4,8
2020	16 097	7 566	2 459	983	3 855	484	750	100,0	47,0	15,3	6,1	23,9	3,0	4,7
2021	18 208	9 175	3 202	881	3 652	499	799	100,0	50,4	17,6	4,8	20,1	2,7	4,4



**Table 12 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by type of occupation at the time of divorce, 2021**

Occupation	Number		%	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>18 208</b>	<b>18 208</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Professional, semi-professionals and technical occupations	2 707	2 906	14,9	16,0
Managers and administrators	1 716	1 346	9,4	7,4
Clerical and sales occupations	787	1 605	4,3	8,8
Transport delivery and communications	717	70	3,9	0,4
Services occupations	2 133	1 720	11,7	9,4
Farming and related occupations	102	23	0,6	0,1
Artisans apprentice and related occupations	776	110	4,3	0,6
Production foreman mine and quarry worker	472	174	2,6	1,0
Not economically active / Unemployed	4 024	5 197	22,1	28,5
Unspecified	4 774	5 057	26,2	27,8

**Table 13 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and plaintiff, 2021**

Population group	Number					%				
	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>18 208</b>	6 142	9 981	921	1 164	<b>100,0</b>	33,7	54,8	5,1	6,4
Black African	<b>9 175</b>	3 255	4 727	592	601	<b>100,0</b>	35,5	51,5	6,5	6,6
Coloured	<b>3 202</b>	965	1 959	108	170	<b>100,0</b>	30,1	61,2	3,4	5,3
Indian/Asian	<b>881</b>	273	533	25	50	<b>100,0</b>	31,0	60,5	2,8	5,7
White	<b>3 652</b>	1 259	2 120	136	137	<b>100,0</b>	34,5	58,1	3,7	3,8
Mixed	<b>499</b>	158	286	32	23	<b>100,0</b>	31,7	57,3	6,4	4,6
Unspecified	<b>799</b>	232	356	28	183	<b>100,0</b>	29,0	44,6	3,5	22,9

**Table 14 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by province of divorce registration and plaintiff, 2021**

Province of divorce registration	Number					%				
	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>18 208</b>	<b>6 142</b>	<b>9 981</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>1 164</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>33,7</b>	<b>54,8</b>	<b>5,1</b>	<b>6,4</b>
Western Cape	<b>3 833</b>	1 253	2 258	124	198	<b>100,0</b>	32,7	58,9	3,2	5,2
Eastern Cape	<b>2 138</b>	678	1 156	203	101	<b>100,0</b>	31,7	54,1	9,5	4,7
Northern Cape	<b>652</b>	195	340	10	107	<b>100,0</b>	29,9	52,1	1,5	16,4
Free State	<b>1 365</b>	539	739	37	50	<b>100,0</b>	39,5	54,1	2,7	3,7
KwaZulu-Natal	<b>2 851</b>	1 033	1 516	97	205	<b>100,0</b>	36,2	53,2	3,4	7,2
North West	<b>632</b>	222	361	21	28	<b>100,0</b>	35,1	57,1	3,3	4,4
Gauteng	<b>4 859</b>	1 542	2 629	328	360	<b>100,0</b>	31,7	54,1	6,8	7,4
Mpumalanga	<b>828</b>	303	435	36	54	<b>100,0</b>	36,6	52,5	4,3	6,5
Limpopo	<b>1 050</b>	377	547	65	61	<b>100,0</b>	35,9	52,1	6,2	5,8

**Table 15 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and way of solemnisation of the marriage, 2021**

Population group	Number				%			
	Total	Religious	DHA	Unspecified	Total	Religious	DHA	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 208</b>	<b>7 891</b>	<b>8 715</b>	<b>1 602</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>43,3</b>	<b>47,9</b>	<b>8,8</b>
Black African	9 175	2 564	6 170	441	100,0	27,9	67,2	4,8
Coloured	3 202	2 096	839	267	100,0	65,5	26,2	8,3
Indian/Asian	881	337	416	128	100,0	38,3	47,2	14,5
White	3 652	2 450	714	488	100,0	67,1	19,6	13,4
Mixed	499	174	277	48	100,0	34,9	55,5	9,6
Unspecified	799	270	299	230	100,0	54,1	59,9	46,1

**Table 16 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by number of times married at the time of divorce, 2021**

Number of times married	Number		%	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 208</b>	<b>18 208</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Once	15 510	15 851	85,2	87,1
Twice	1 918	1 504	10,5	8,3
Three or more	200	168	1,1	0,9
Unspecified	580	685	3,2	3,8

**Table 17 – Number of divorces by age and population group (male divorcees), 2021**

Age group	Population group						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 208</b>	<b>9 440</b>	<b>3 367</b>	<b>1 028</b>	<b>3 787</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>538</b>
<25	51	12	14	5	17	1	2
25-29	484	98	138	41	193	-	14
30-34	1 486	543	388	135	378	-	42
35-39	3 093	1 550	653	196	600	2	92
40-44	3 356	1 874	641	185	567	8	81
45-49	3 279	1 888	529	177	592	5	88
50-54	2 606	1 415	454	108	546	4	79
55-59	1 621	920	242	60	341	1	57
60-64	943	479	153	31	251	3	26
65-69	425	207	60	14	132	1	11
70-74	157	75	15	3	63	-	1
75-79	63	21	5	2	32	-	3
80+	33	16	3	2	10	-	2
Unspecified	611	342	72	69	65	23	40

**Table 18 – Number of divorces by age group and population group (female divorcees), 2021**

Age group	Population group						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 208</b>	<b>9 370</b>	<b>3 478</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>3 724</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>676</b>
<25	145	45	34	8	54	-	4
25-29	1 053	371	249	77	312	-	44
30-34	2 689	1 378	522	174	544	-	71
35-39	3 821	2 145	726	198	627	1	124
40-44	3 446	1 974	622	171	558	1	120
45-49	2 813	1 521	513	141	543	-	95
50-54	1 846	883	360	86	427	1	89
55-59	1 021	471	192	40	280	2	36
60-64	527	204	105	19	177	-	22
65-69	194	60	43	7	76	-	8
70-74	85	30	18	1	34	-	2
75-79	22	8	4	2	8	-	-
80+	7	2	-	1	4	-	-
Unspecified	539	278	90	29	80	1	61

**Table 19 – Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (male divorcees), 2021**

Age group of husband	Duration of marriage									
	Total	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35+	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 208</b>	<b>2 909</b>	<b>4 836</b>	<b>3 877</b>	<b>2 448</b>	<b>1 488</b>	<b>889</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>912</b>
<25	51	35	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
25-29	484	329	126	1	-	-	-	-	-	28
30-34	1 486	530	723	159	4	-	-	-	-	70
35-39	3 093	639	1 381	812	134	4	-	-	-	123
40-44	3 356	455	1 023	1 107	531	99	1	-	-	140
45-49	3 279	342	650	847	757	417	99	2	-	165
50-54	2 606	240	386	422	500	477	349	95	1	136
55-59	1 621	123	172	205	237	282	272	177	62	91
60-64	943	56	115	114	133	111	96	127	132	59
65-69	425	30	50	43	39	49	32	48	108	26
70-74	157	18	21	10	18	13	12	10	46	9
75-79	63	5	7	8	9	6	7	4	13	4
80+	33	7	6	2	1	6	2	2	6	1
Unspecified	611	100	172	147	85	24	19	10	6	48

**Table 20 – Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (female divorcees), 2021**

Age group of wife	Duration of marriage									
	Total	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35+	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 208</b>	<b>2 909</b>	<b>4 836</b>	<b>3 877</b>	<b>2 448</b>	<b>1 488</b>	<b>889</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>912</b>
<25	145	120	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
25-29	1 053	543	442	23	-	-	-	-	-	45
30-34	2 689	735	1 306	510	23	-	-	-	-	115
35-39	3 821	544	1 362	1 334	394	21	-	-	-	166
40-44	3 446	353	763	1 017	851	286	15	-	-	161
45-49	2 813	247	411	513	621	601	255	22	-	143
50-54	1 846	130	221	219	281	337	363	167	16	112
55-59	1 021	90	104	97	120	131	157	173	101	48
60-64	527	30	52	44	54	46	56	72	138	35
65-69	194	15	15	11	21	23	13	19	64	13
70-74	85	6	5	3	8	5	8	7	35	8
75-79	22	1	3	2	2	3	2	-	7	2
80+	7	1	1	1	-	2	-	-	1	1
Unspecified	539	94	138	103	73	33	20	15	12	51

**Table 21 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and divorces with and without children (aged below 18 years), 2021**

Population group	Total	Divorces with children	Divorces without children	Total	Divorces with children	Divorces without children
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 208</b>	<b>10 308</b>	<b>7 900</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>56,6</b>	<b>43,4</b>
Black African	9 175	5 688	3 487	100,0	62,0	38,0
Coloured	3 202	1 949	1 253	100,0	60,9	39,1
Indian/Asian	881	471	410	100,0	53,5	46,5
White	3 652	1 600	2 052	100,0	43,8	56,2
Mixed	499	243	256	100,0	48,7	51,3
Unspecified	799	357	442	100,0	44,7	55,3

**Table 22 – Number and percentage distribution of population group by children (aged below 18 years) affected by divorces, 2021**

Population group	Total number of children involved	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17 345</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Black African	9 642	55,6
White	3 367	19,4
Coloured	745	4,3
Indian/Asian	2 579	14,9
Mixed	406	2,3
Unspecified	606	3,5



## 5. Explanatory notes

### 5.1 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 2021. 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.

### 5.2 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.

### 5.3 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 2021 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 2021, Stats SA received and processed 18 208 divorce forms.

### 5.4 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.

### 5.5 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.

## 5.6 Symbols

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

## 5.7 Electronic services

A large range of data are available via online services, CD and computer printouts. For more details about our electronic data, contact user information services.

You can visit us on the Internet at [www.statssa.gov.za](http://www.statssa.gov.za)

### Enquiries

Telephone: (012) 310 8600 (user information services)  
(079) 511 9917 (technical enquiries)  
(012) 310 8251 (orders)  
(012) 310 4883/4885/8018 (library)

Fax: (012) 310 8500/ 8495 (user information services)  
(012) 310 6937 (technical enquiries)

Email: TshwaroG@statssa.gov.za (technical enquiries)  
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## 5.8 References

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