

# 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 2017 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 2017 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 minor children. 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 other 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 2017. The 2017 mid-year population estimates [*Mid-year population estimates, 2017* (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 are 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 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 the same year. 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 (2008 – 2017)

Information provided in Table 1, on page 20, shows that 135 458 civil marriages of South African citizens and permanent residents were registered at the Department of Home Affairs in 2017. Table 1 further shows that the number of registered marriages consistently declined in the ten-year period (2008 to 2017), except for a slight increase of 0,6% between 2015 and 2016. During the period 2008 to 2017, the highest number of marriages was recorded in 2008 (186 522) and the lowest number in 2017 (135 458). The 2017 figure of 135 458 civil marriages shows a decrease of 2,9% from the 139 512 marriages recorded in 2016.

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 either solemnisation of marriages has a second peak in March or April, depending on the month of the Easter holiday for that particular year. In 2017, the highest number of marriages [17 460 (12,9%)] took place in December and the lowest number of marriages, [8 928 (6,6%)] occurred in June. The number of marriages in December were almost double that for January in 2017. Peaks seem to be linked to the school calendar for long holidays, which allows many people to travel to participate in marriage celebrations.

#### 2.1.2 Solemnisation of civil marriages

Marriage solemnisation can only be conducted by marriage officers who are appointed in terms of section 2 (2) of the marriage act. 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 21 shows the distribution of civil marriages registered in 2017 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, 78 768 (58,1%) of the 135 458 marriages were solemnised by DHA marriage officers and 38 981 (28,8%) by 'Religious' rites. The type of solemnisation rite was not specified in 17 709 (13,1%) marriages. Table 2 further shows that 418 (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 2017, the observed crude civil marriage rate was 2,4 per 1 000 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 2017, the highest number of marriages was registered in Gauteng [35 359 (26,1%)] and the lowest in Northern Cape [3 950 (2,9%)]. Looking at ways of marriage solemnisation within each province, North West had the highest proportion of marriages, 81,0% (7 479) solemnised by civil marriage officers. Western Cape recorded the highest proportion, 50,7% (11 230) of marriages solemnised by religious marriage officers. Wide differences of 'unspecified' way of solemnisation by province were noted. For example, 29,9% (2 111) of marriages in Mpumalanga had 'unspecified' method of solemnisation compared with 1,1% (104) in North West.

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<sup>1</sup> The crude civil marriage rate refers to the number of civil marriages per 1 000 persons in the population.

### 2.1.3 Marital status at the time of civil marriage

Table 3 on page 22 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 2017 for both bridegrooms and brides were first-time marriages in all provinces. For bridegrooms, there were 111 306 (82,2%) never married men, 5 074 (3,7%) divorcees and 1 171 (0,9%) widowers. For the brides, there were 117 779 (86,9%) never married women whilst 3 227 (2,4%) were divorcees and 896 (0,7%) were widows. The marital status of 17 907 (13,2%) bridegrooms and 13 556 (10,0%) brides were unspecified. A high proportion of marriages between bridegrooms and brides marrying for the first time was observed in Limpopo where 8 514 (86,1%) and 9 163 (92,6%) were never married men and women respectively. The profile of those that were remarrying showed that remarriages were more prevalent in divorcees compared to the widowed, 5 074 (3,7%) divorcees and 1 171 (0,9%) widowers for bridegrooms and 3 227 (2,4%) divorcees and 896 (0,7%) widows for brides.

The number of marriages by marital status of husband and age differences between spouses are shown in Table 4 on page 23. It is observed that irrespective of their marital status, men generally married women who had never been married. Thus 104 859 (94,2%) of never married men wedded never married women, 1 151 (1,0%) married divorcees and 643 (0,6%) married widows. In addition, irrespective of the fact that more divorcees and widowers wedded never married women, the proportion of male divorcees who married female divorcees 826 (16,3%) was higher than the proportion that married widows 43 (0,8%). Similarly, the proportion of widowers who married widows 167 (14,3%) was higher than the proportion that married female divorcees 27 (2,3%).

Table 4 also suggests that men tend to marry younger women, as 103 901 (76,7%) of the 135 458 bridegrooms were older than their brides. However, 21 144 (15,6%) bridegrooms were younger than their brides and 10 412 (7,7%) 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, 44,2% of never married men who married divorcees were younger than their brides (see Figure 2a) and 4,7% of male divorcees who married widowed women were also younger than their brides (see Figure 2c). A relatively smaller percentage (5,6%) 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 minors (persons under 18 years old). These minors 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 16 years of age require the consent of the Minister of Home Affairs before they can get married.

In 2017, marriages of 2 bridegrooms and 70 brides aged less than 18 years were registered, with 62 of these brides marrying for the first time (see Table 5 on page 24). Figure 3 on page 12 indicates that the highest number of never married men [28 591 (25,7%)] were aged 30–34 years whereas the highest number of spinsters [34 351 (29,2%)] were aged 25–29 years. There were more never married women compared to never married men at younger ages (less than 35 years) and vice versa at older ages (35 years and older). Figure 4a



on page 13 shows the median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage. The median age of bridegrooms remain constant at 36 years since 2015 whereas the median age of brides was 32 years since 2016. 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 at current marriage 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 34 years and 31 years respectively in 2017, showing an age difference of three years (see Figure 4b). For remarriages, the median age for widowers and widows in 2017 (see Figure 4c) were 55 years and 31 years respectively, resulting in a 24-year age gap. The median age for widowers consistently increased from 50 years in 2013 to 55 years in 2017, with the exception of 2014 where it decreased by a year from the 2013 median age, to 49. The median age of widows was fluctuating between 30 years and 32 years during 2013 and 2017.

The median age at marriage for divorcees are shown in Figure 4d. It is observed that the median age for male divorcees increased from 53 years in 2013 to 55 years in 2015 and remained at this level until 2017. In comparison, the median age of female divorcee remained the same at 48 years between 2013 and 2015; thereafter showed a one-year increase from 48 years in 2015 to 49 years in 2016 and 2017. There was a six-year age difference in the median ages between male and female divorcees who married in 2017.

## 2.2 Customary marriages

### 2.2.1 Trends in the registration of customary marriages (2008–2017)

In 2017, 2 588 customary marriages were registered at the Department of Home Affairs, indicating a decrease of 34,9% from 3 978 customary marriages registered in 2016. It is observed from Table 6 on page 27 that the number of registered customary marriages fluctuated between 2008 and 2017. The highest number of registered customary marriages was recorded in 2008 (16 003) whilst the lowest number was recorded in 2017 (2 588). The observed crude customary marriage rate was 0,05 per 1 000 estimated resident population in 2017<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 15 shows that the majority of customary marriages were registered later than the year of marriage. During the period from 2013 to 2017, the proportion of marriages that were registered in the same year they took place, ranged from 18,6% in 2013 to 22,4% in 2017.

### 2.2.2 Age at the time of customary marriage

The results presented in Table 7 on page 28 show that in 2017, more than half, 1 452 (56,1%) of the registered customary marriages were from KwaZulu-Natal followed by Limpopo with 535 (20,7%). The other seven (7) provinces had less than 7% each. The age distribution of bridegrooms and brides at the time of customary marriage is presented in Table 8 on page 29. In 2017, there were 8 (0,3%) bridegrooms and 77 (3,0%) brides who were younger than 18 years.

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 customary marriages registered between 2013 and 2017. The median ages of both bridegrooms and brides were fluctuating over the period 2013 and 2017. The median age of bridegrooms fluctuated between 33 years and 35 years whereas that of brides was fluctuating between 27 years and 29 years. A further comparison of

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<sup>2</sup> The crude customary marriage rate refers to the number of customary marriages per 1 000 persons in the population

the ages of bridegrooms and brides (see Figure 7 on page 16) shows that in 2017, 85,9% of bridegrooms were older than their brides whilst 9,7% 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 (2013–2017)

Table 9 on page 32 shows that in 2017, 1 357 civil unions were registered (including the registration of three civil unions of South African citizens and permanent residents living outside South Africa). In 2017, the crude civil union rate was 0,02 per 1 000 estimated resident population<sup>3</sup>. In general, the number of civil unions registered in South Africa increased over the five-year period. Civil unions registered increased by 2,0% from 1 331 in 2016 to 1 357 in 2017. The provincial distribution of civil unions registered in 2017 indicates that Gauteng 507 (37,4%) and Western Cape 391 (28,8%) were the provinces with the highest number of registrations of civil unions. In total, 66,2% of civil unions in 2017 were registered in these two provinces. The lowest number of registered civil unions was recorded in Northern Cape 16 (1,2%) and Limpopo 15 (1,1%).

### 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 33. 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 33 shows that the highest number of spouses-1 [332 (24,5%)] were aged 30–34 years whereas the highest number of spouses-2 [330 (24,3%)] were aged 25–29 years.

As observed in Figure 8 on page 16, the median age of spouses-1 were higher than those of spouses-2. The median age of spouses-1 decreased by a year from 36 years in 2016 to 35 years in 2017 whereas the median age of spouses-2 remained the same at 33 years in 2016 and 2017. 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 2017, 62,4% of spouses-1 were older than their spouses, whilst 30,6% were younger than their spouses and 7,0% 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 1 000 persons in the population

### 3. Divorces

#### 3.1 Trends in divorces (2008 – 2017)

The 2017 divorce data reported in this statistical release is based on 25 390 completed divorce forms that Stats SA received and processed by the end of December 2018. The number (25 390) indicates an increase of 64 (0,3%) divorces from the 25 326 cases processed in 2016 (see Table 11 on page 36). The table shows that the total number of divorces fluctuated over the period 2008 to 2011 followed by a consistent increase from 2012 to 2017, with the highest number observed in 2009 (30 763) and the lowest in 2011 (20 980). In 2017, about 155 divorces were granted for same-sex couples of which 115 were female couples and 40 were male couples. The observed crude divorce rate was 0,4 divorces per 1 000 estimated resident population in 2017<sup>4</sup>.

Table 11 also provides data on divorces classified by population group and the year in which the divorce was granted. In 2017, the population group of 1 282 couples was not specified. Black African couples had the highest number of divorces compared to other population groups during the ten-year period (2008 to 2017). In 2017, 11 309 (44,5%) of the 25 390 divorces were from black African population group followed by white 6 048 (23,8%), coloured 4 517 (17,8%) and India/Asian 1 401 (5,5%). The 2017 crude divorce rate by population groups show that the white population had a rate of 1,3 per 1 000 population followed by Indian/Asian with 1,0 per 1 000 population, coloured with 0,9 per 1 000 population and black African with 0,2 per 1 000 population.

Table 12 on page 37 indicates information on the occupation of husbands and wives at the time of divorce. It is noted that a high proportion of husbands (27,3%) and wives (30,8%) did not specify the type of occupation they were engaged in at the time of divorce. In addition, 18,0% and 24,7% of husbands and wives respectively were not economically active at the time of divorce. Most male divorcees were managers and administrators 3 530 (13,9%) and 3 481 (13,7%) were employed in professional, semi-professional and technical occupations while female divorcees were largely in professional, semi-professional and technical occupations 3 959 (15,6%) and clerical and sales occupations 2 717 (10,7%).

#### 3.2 Characteristics of plaintiffs

The 2017 data presented in Table 13 on page 38 show that more wives than husbands, 12 938 (51,0%) women compared to 8 878 (35,0%) men initiated divorce proceedings and 1 728 (6,8%) divorces were initiated by both husband and wife. The sex of the plaintiff was not specified in 1 846 (7,3%) cases. With the exception of women from the black African population who had a lower proportion of plaintiffs (45,1%), the proportion of women plaintiffs from the other population groups was above 50,0%. The proportion of women plaintiffs for the white population group, Indian/Asian population group and coloured population group were 58,2%, 56,6% and 56,2% respectively. Among black African divorcees, divorce initiated by both partners constituted about 10%.

Table 14 on page 38 provides information on the province and sex of the plaintiff. The provincial distribution indicates that Western Cape (6 050), Gauteng (6 046), KwaZulu-Natal (4 349) and Eastern Cape (3 285) were the provinces with the highest number of divorces granted. Together the four provinces contributed over three quarters 19 730 (77,7%) of the divorces granted in 2017. However, this could also be due to the fact that these provinces have the largest populations. Eastern Cape had the highest proportion of both husband and wife as plaintiffs (14,8%).

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

Information presented in Table 15 on page 39 shows that 11 675 (46,0%) of the 2017 divorce cases were from marriages that were solemnised by religious rites and 11 275 (44,4%) by civil rites. Over two-thirds (68,9%) of divorces from the white population group and 66,0% of divorces from the coloured population group were from

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<sup>4</sup> The crude divorce rate refers to the number of divorces per 1 000 persons in the population

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, 66,1% and 52,0% respectively.

### 3.4 Number of times married

Results presented in Table 16 on page 39 show that the 2017 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 11,6% of men and 10,0% of women from second-time marriages. Less than 2,0% 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 2017 were 44 years for males and 40 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 2017 by population group showed that black African males had the highest median age of 45 years, while the Indian/Asian population group recorded the lowest median age for both sexes. 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 coloured, Indian/Asian and white population groups, with median age differences of three years between males and females.

Detailed information on the age and population group of divorcees is presented in Figure 11 on page 18 for males and in Figure 12 on page 18 for females, as well as in Tables 17 and 18 on pages 40 and 41 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 starts later for black African males than other population groups and slightly lower for Indian males at older ages. For males, the peak age group at divorce was 40 to 44 for all population groups (see Figure 11), except for the white population group where the highest peak was from the age group 45 to 49 years. In the case of females, the peak age group for black African and coloured population groups was 35 to 39 years and the peak for Indian/Asian and white population groups was 40 to 44 years (see Figure 12).

### 3.6 Duration of marriage of divorcing couples

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 the divorces granted in 2017. Table 19 and Table 20 show that the largest number [6 906 (27,2%)] of divorces were for marriages that lasted between five and nine years. This group is followed by marriages that lasted between ten and 14 years [4 985 (19,6%)] and marriages that lasted for less than five years [4 424 (17,4%)]. Results showed that four in ten divorces 11 330 (44,6%) of the 25 390 in 2017 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 for five to nine years. Population group variations showed that 29,5% of divorces from the black African; 26,0% from white, 24,9% from coloured and 20,7% from Indian/Asian population groups were from marriages that lasted between five and nine years. The white population had the highest proportion (22,0%) of divorces that occurred in the first five years. The proportion of divorces in all population groups declined as the duration of marriage increased, with a significant decline being observed after nine years of marriage. The proportion of divorces from Indian/Asian population group is higher than the other population groups between ages 15 and 34 years.

### 3.7 Divorces involving couples with minor children

In 2017, 14 121 (55,6%) of the 25 390 divorces had children younger than 18 years whereas 11 266 (44,4%) divorces had no children (see Table 21 on page 44). The profile of white divorcees showed that more than half of the recorded divorces were without children (55,3%). Looking at the coloured and black African divorcees, divorces involving couples with minor children constituted about 61,6% and 61,0% respectively. Table 22 on page 44 shows that 49,6% of children affected by divorce were from the black African population group; 20,0% from the coloured population group; 18,7% from the white population group and 5,0% from the Indian/Asian population group.

## 4. Summary and concluding remarks

This statistical release provided information on civil and customary marriages, civil unions and divorces for 2017, 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.

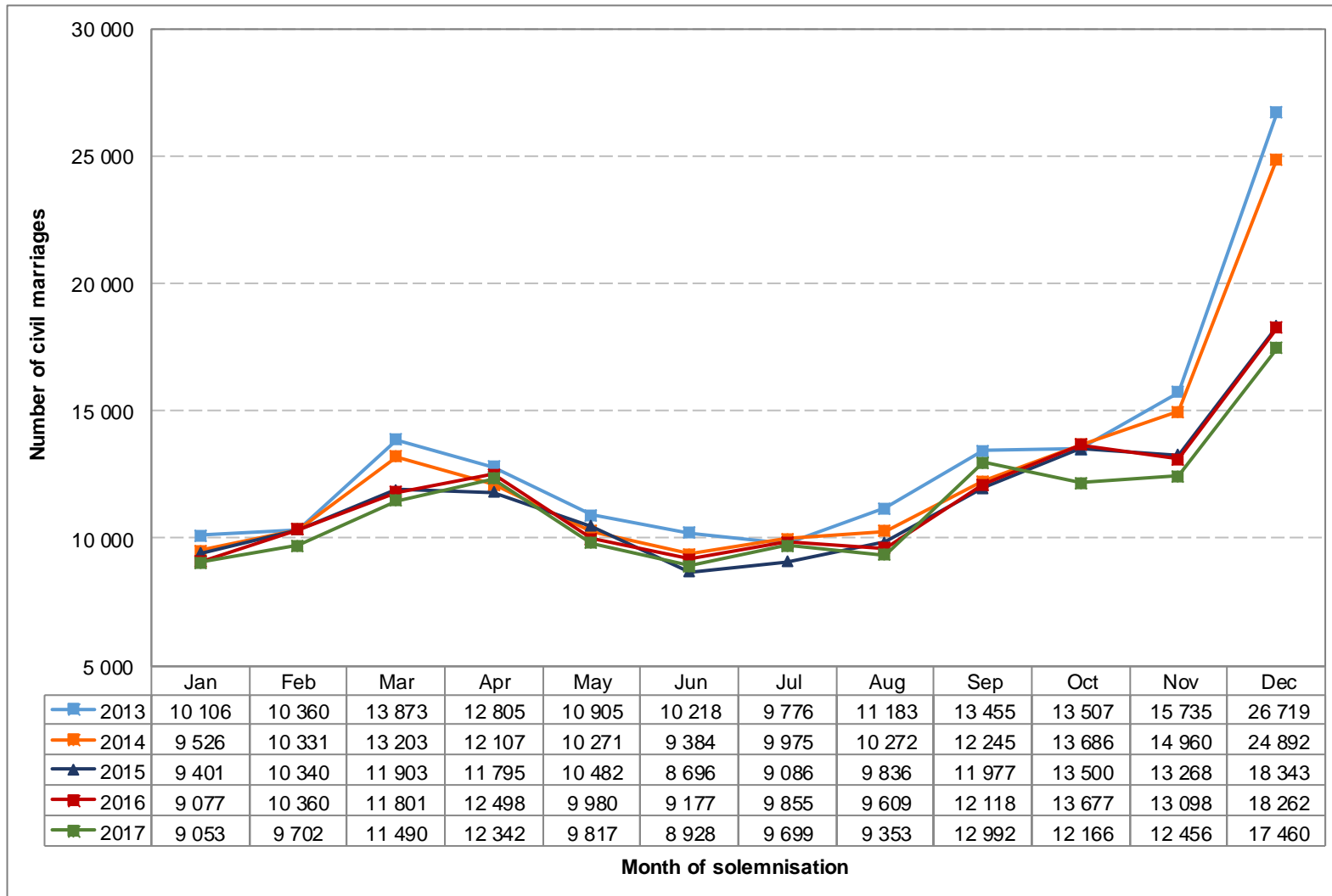
In total, 135 458 civil marriages were registered in South Africa in 2017, with more than half 78 768 (58,1%) being solemnised by DHA marriage officers. The highest number of civil marriages was registered in Gauteng (35 359), followed by Western Cape (22 144) and KwaZulu-Natal (21 206), and the lowest was registered in Northern Cape (3 950). The majority of civil marriages in 2017 for both bridegrooms (111 306) and brides (117 779) were first time marriages, with women generally entering into marriage at younger ages than men.

The number of registered customary marriages was 2 588 in 2017, which decreased by 34,9% from a total of 3 978 recorded in 2016. The majority of bridegrooms [2 223 (85,9%)] were older than their brides, with the gap in median ages at registration of customary marriage much wider than other types of marriages. The number of registered civil unions in South Africa in 2017 was 1 357, most of which were registered in Gauteng (507) and Western Cape (391), and lowest in Northern Cape (16) and Limpopo (15).

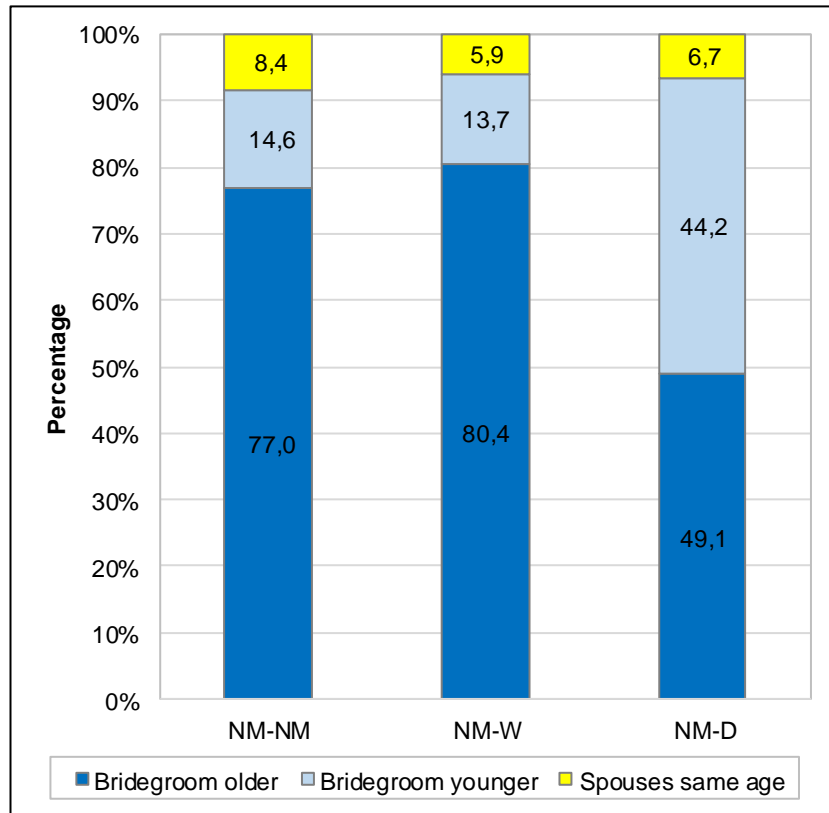
With regard to divorces, the data showed that 25 390 divorces were granted in South Africa in 2017. Generally, there was an increase in the proportion of divorces for black Africans and a decline for the white population group from 2008 to 2017. Divorces were mainly from people who had married for the 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 Western Cape (6 050), Gauteng (6 046), KwaZulu-Natal (4 349) and Eastern Cape (3 285) were the provinces with the highest number of divorces granted. About 23 170 children aged less than 18 years were affected by divorces that took place in 2017.

Overall, the information provided in this release showed fluctuations over time in the number of marriages, unions and divorces in the country. Areas of improvement in the quality of data were noted, particularly relating to completeness of information pertaining to unspecified province of registration, way of solemnisation and marital status at time of marriage for the data on marriages and civil unions; and unspecified population group and occupation of the divorcees.

**Figure 1 – Number of civil marriages by month of solemnisation, 2013 – 2017**



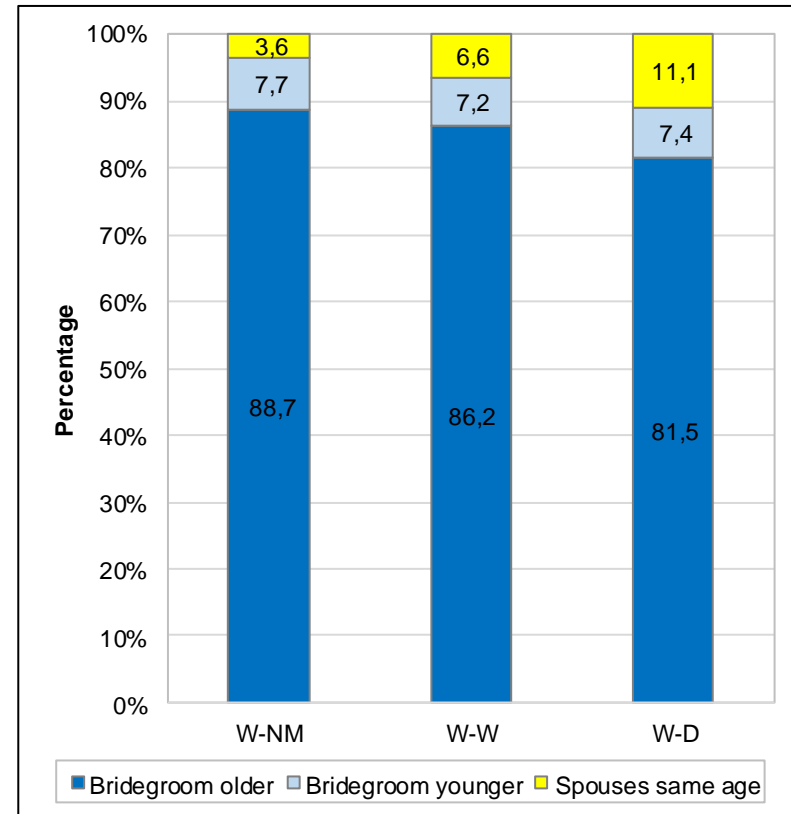
**Figure 2a – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (never married men), 2017**



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

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

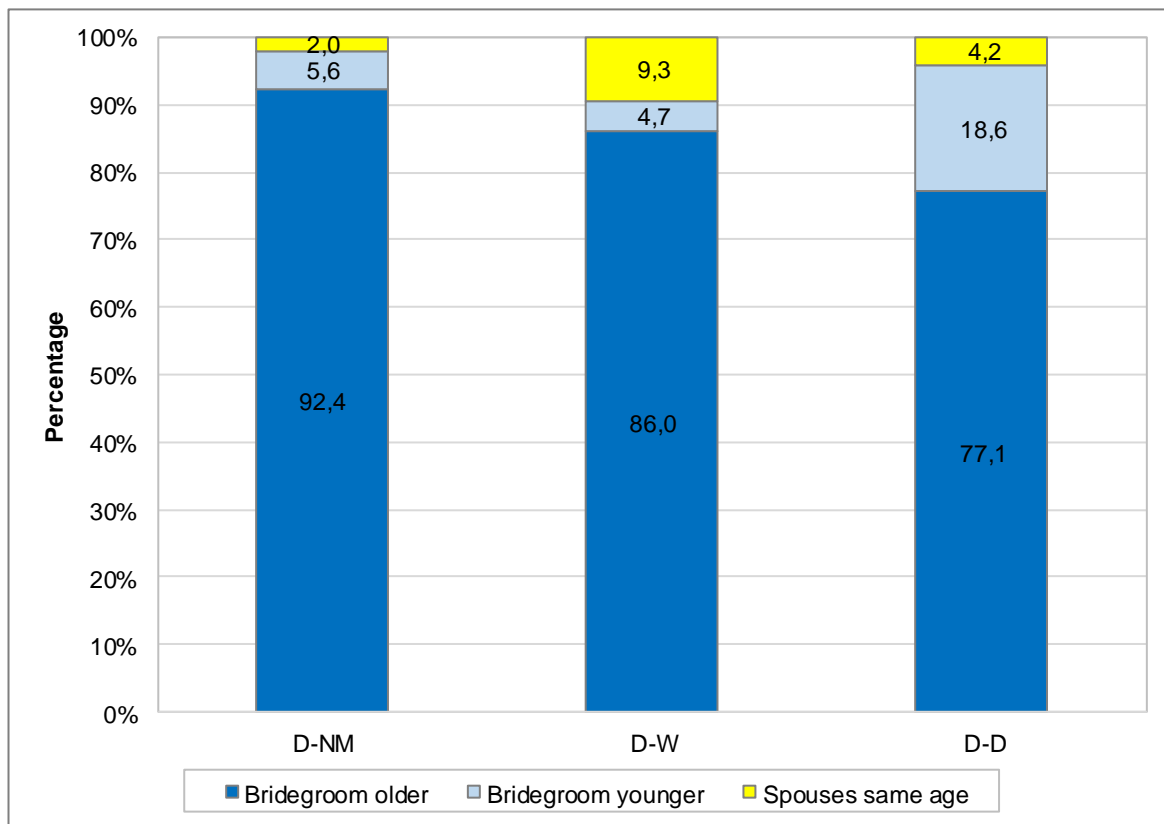
**Figure 2b – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (widowers), 2017**



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

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

**Figure 2c – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (male divorcees), 2017**

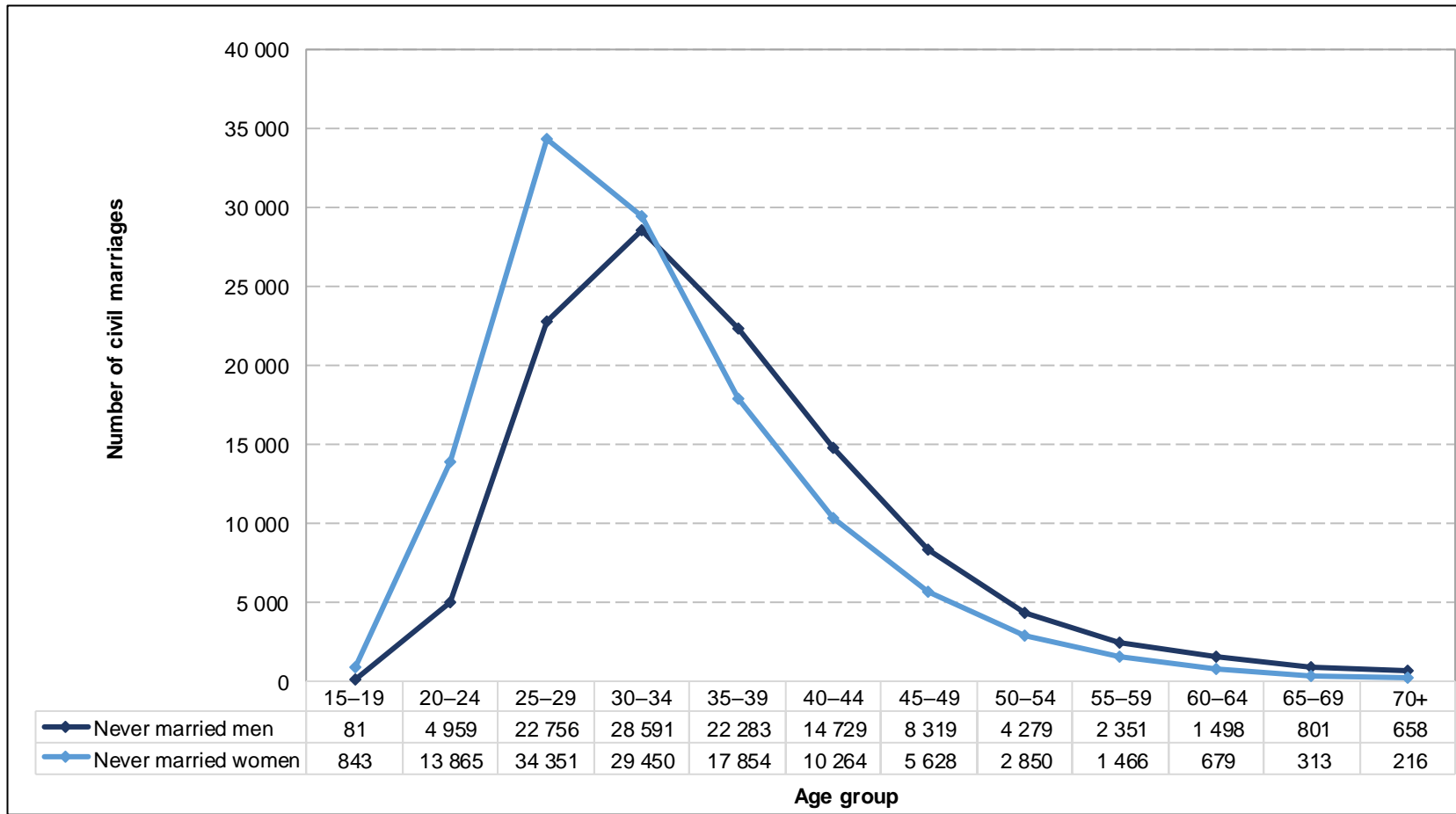


\*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding up.

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

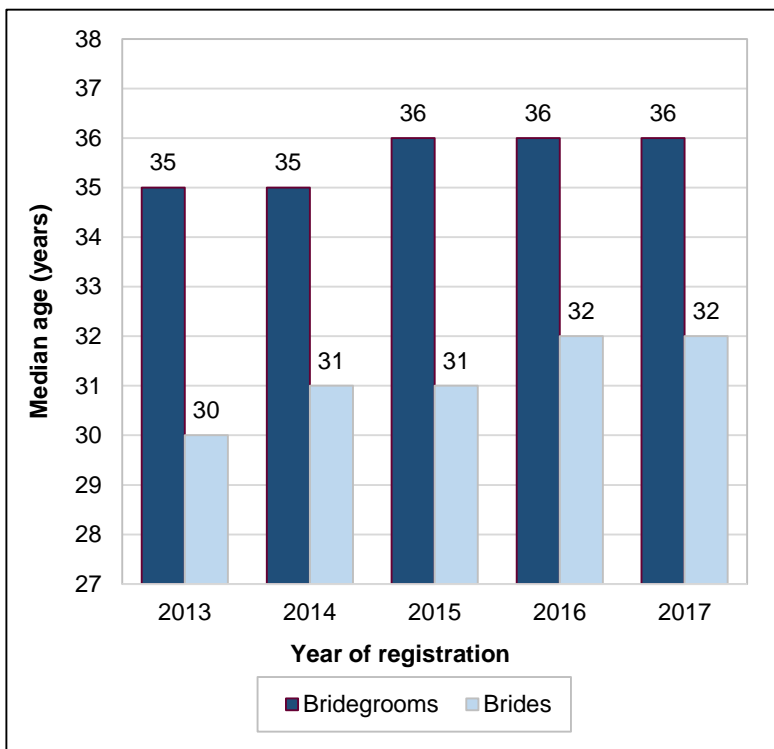


**Figure 3 – Number of civil marriages for never married men and women by age group, 2017**

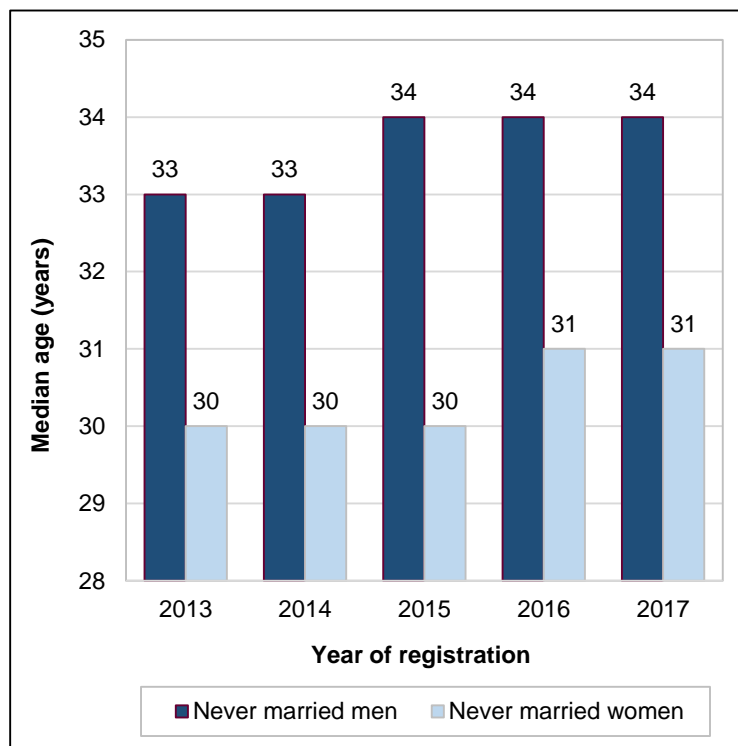


\*Excluding one case with unspecified age of never married man.

**Figure 4a – Median age of bridegrooms and brides at the time of civil marriage, 2013 – 2017**



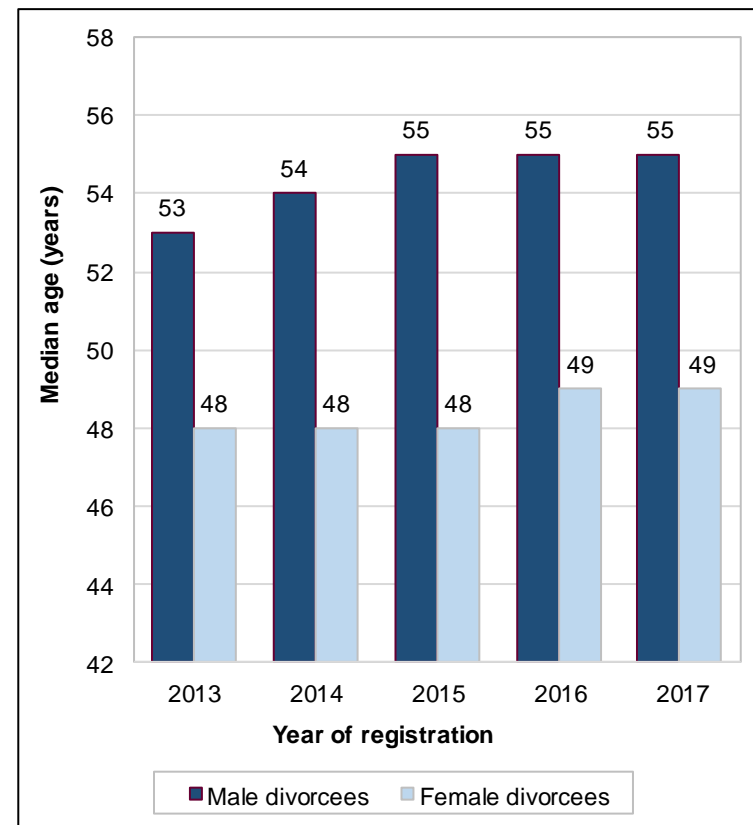
**Figure 4b – Median age of never married men and women at the time of civil marriage, 2013 – 2017**



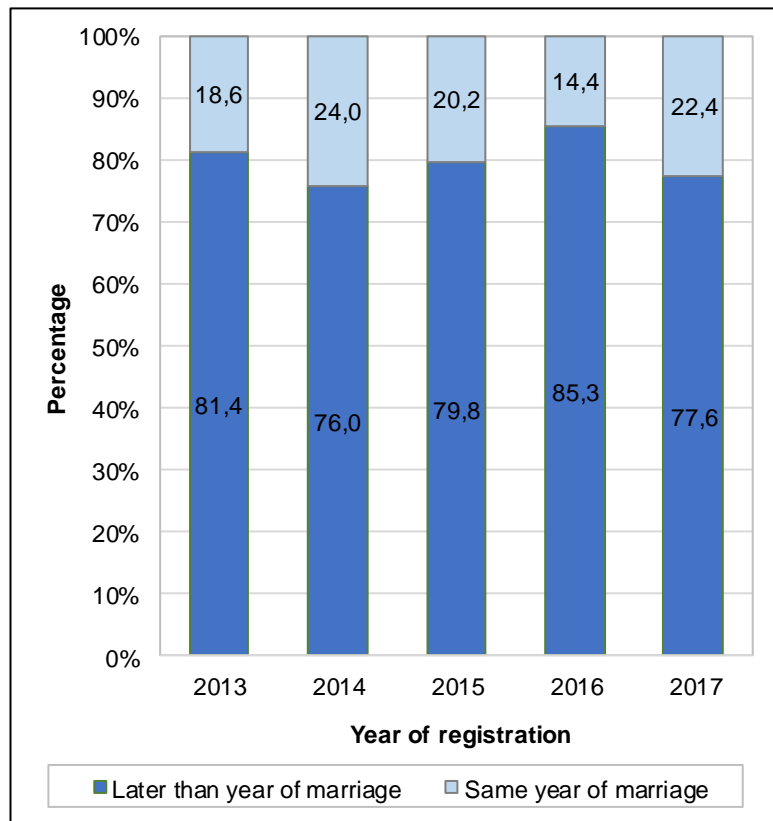
**Figure 4c – Median age of widowers and widows at the time of civil marriage, 2013 – 2017**



**Figure 4d – Median age of male and female divorcees at the time of civil marriage, 2013 – 2017**



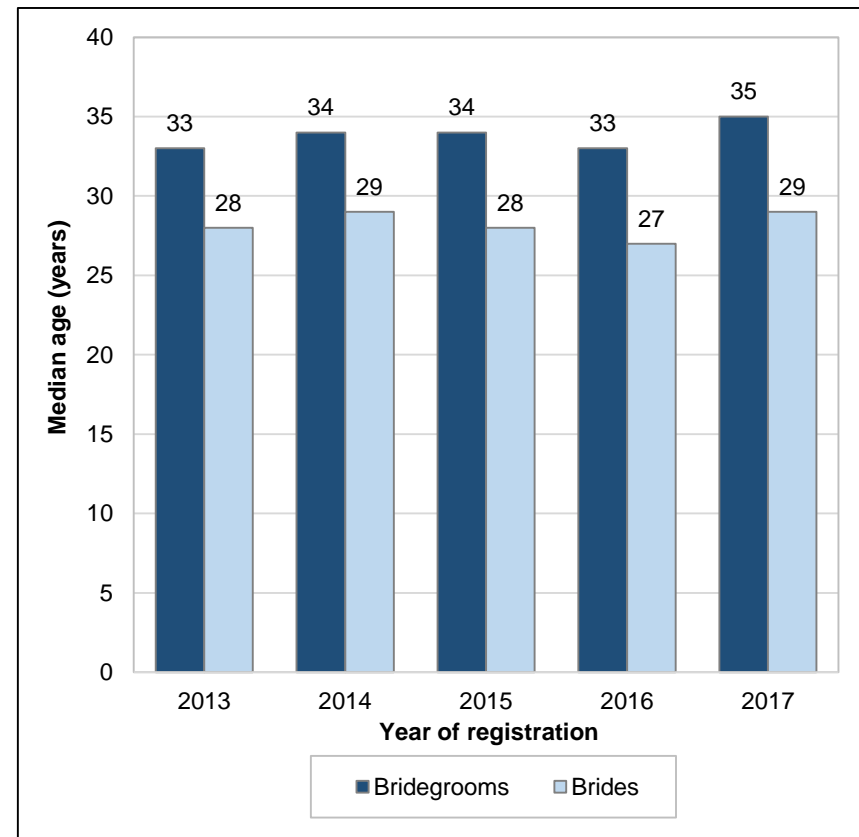
**Figure 5 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by year of marriage and time it took to register the marriage, 2013 – 2017**



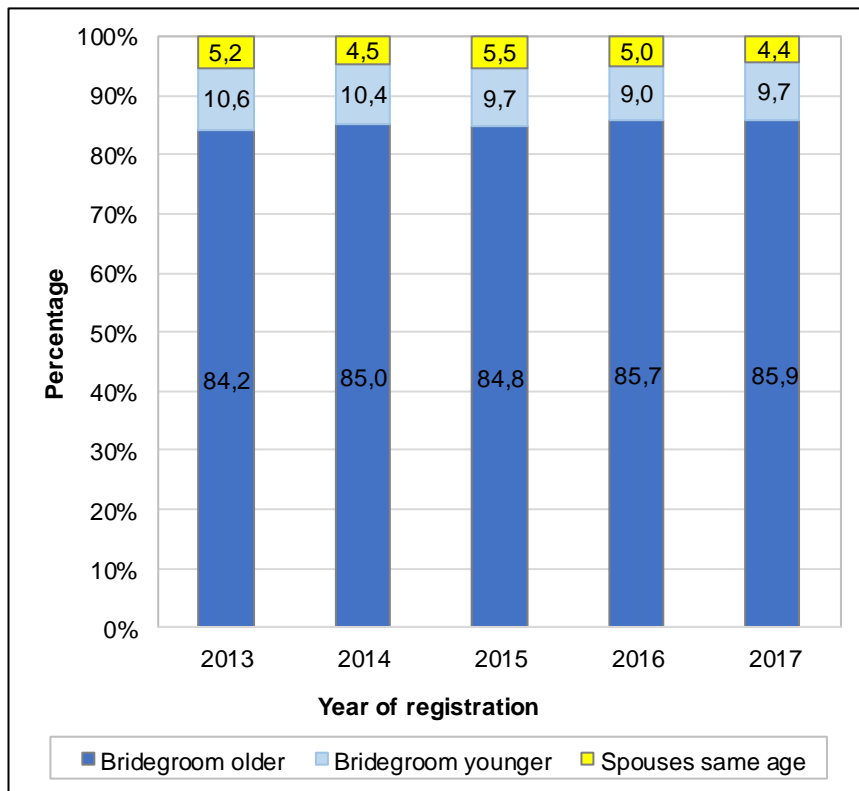
\*Excluding 0,3% of unspecified year of registration in 2016.

\*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, 2013 – 2017**

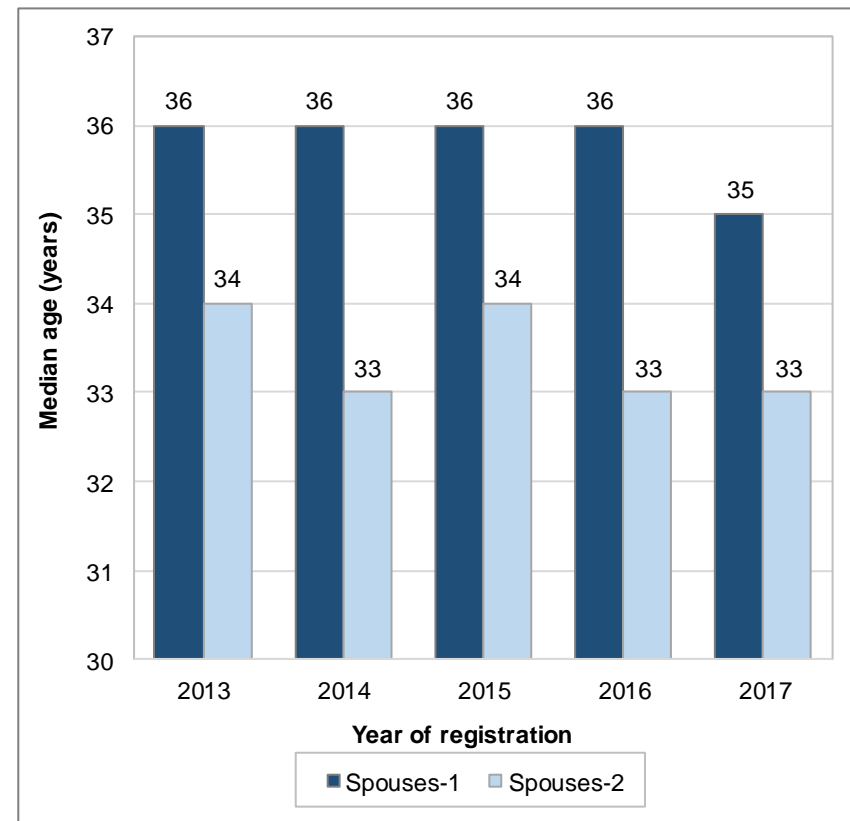


**Figure 7 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage, 2013 – 2017**

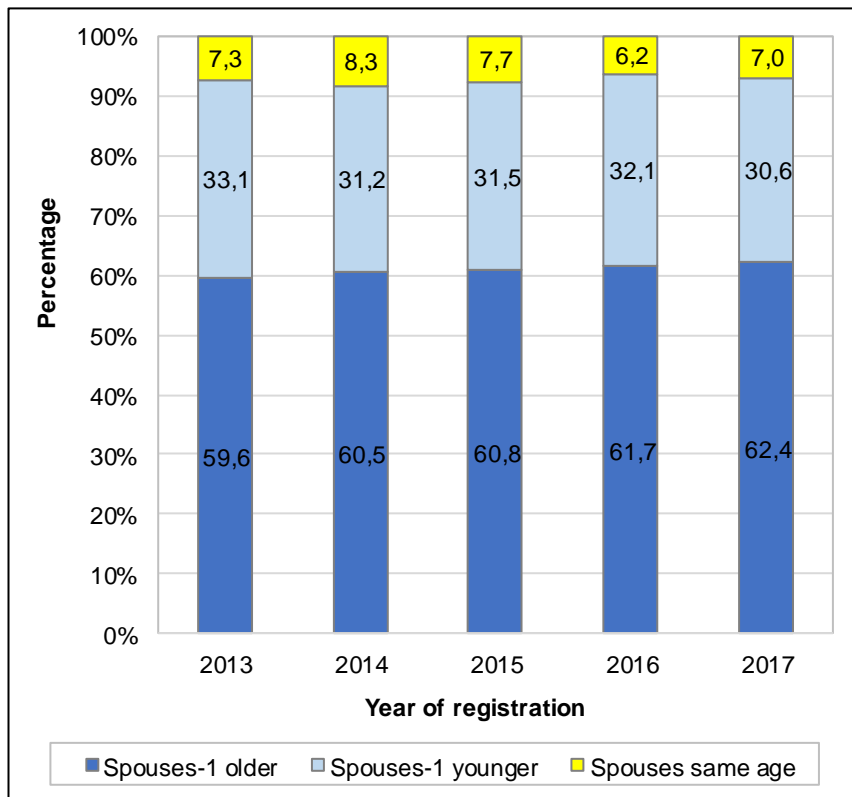


Excluding 0,1% and 0,3% of unspecified age difference in 2014 and 2016 respectively

**Figure 8 – Median age of spouses in civil unions, 2013 – 2017**

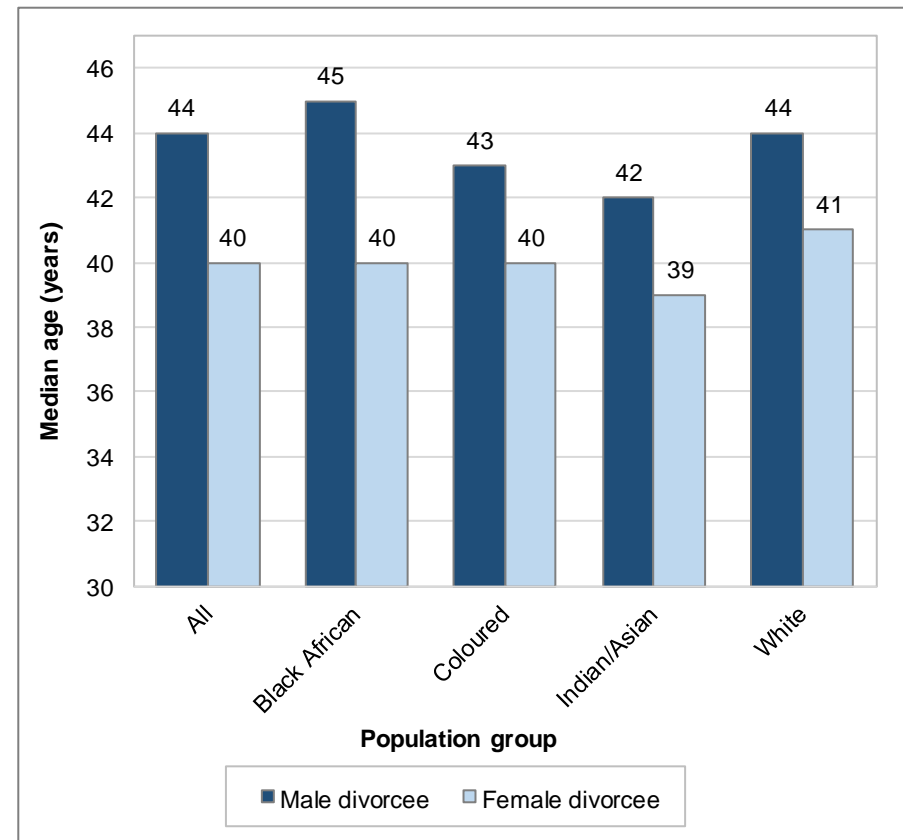


**Figure 9 – Percentage distribution of civil unions by age differences between spouses at the time of union, 2013 – 2017**



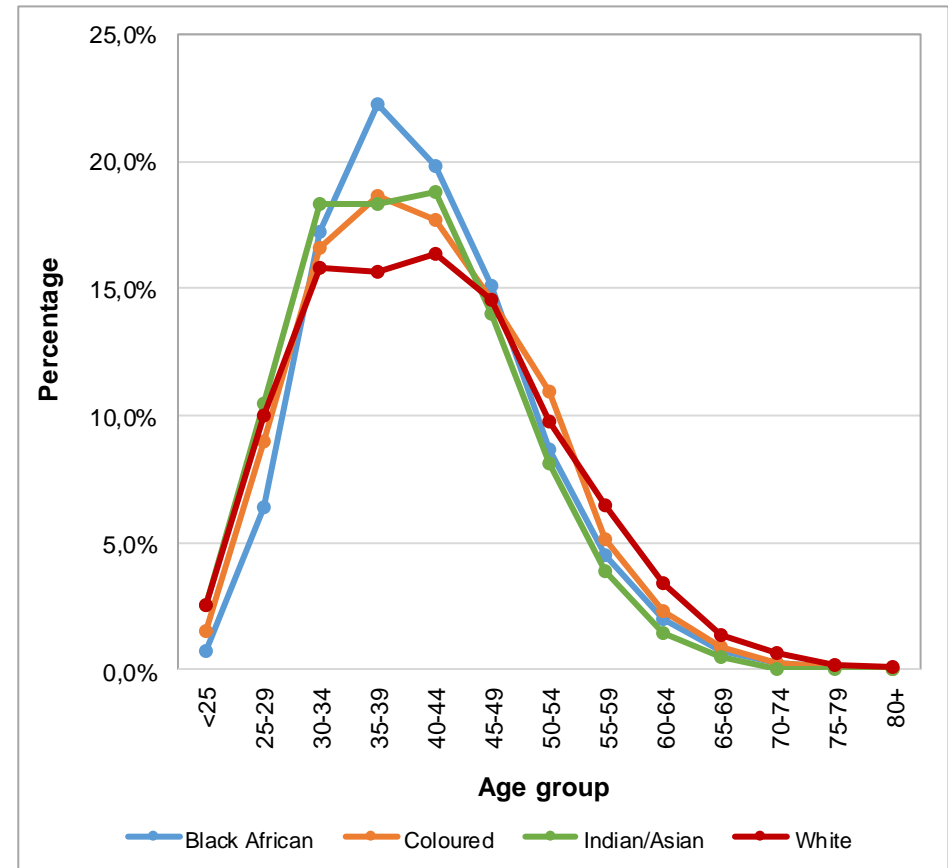
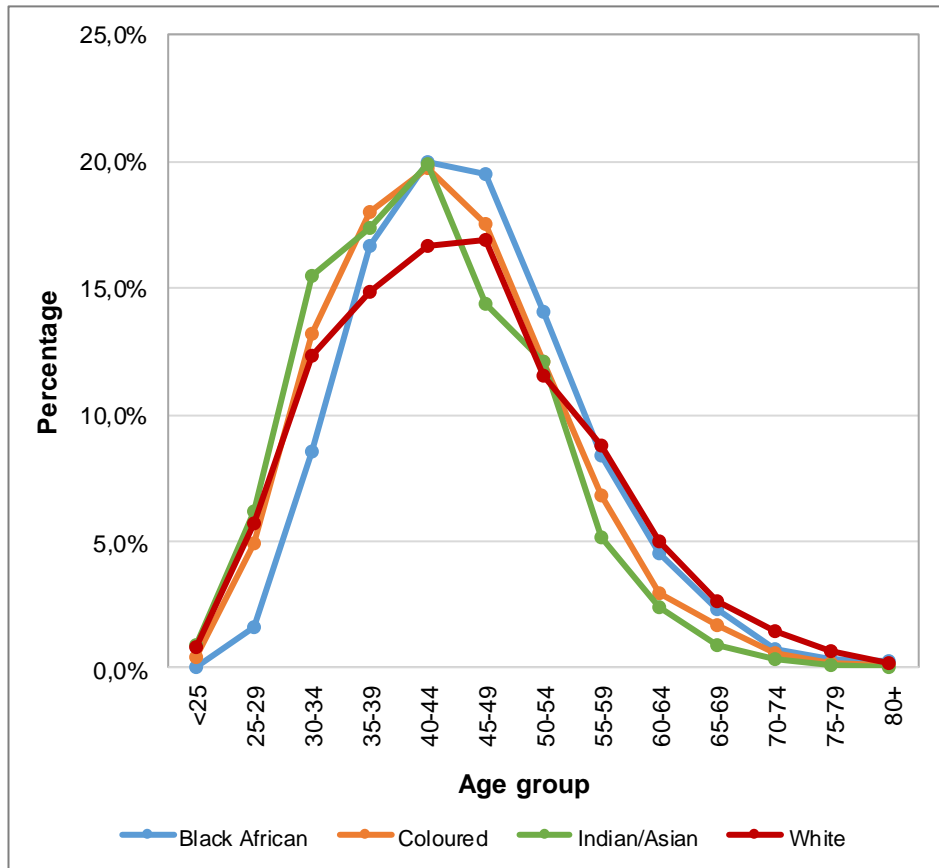
\*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding off.

**Figure 10 – Median age of divorcees by sex and population group, 2017**

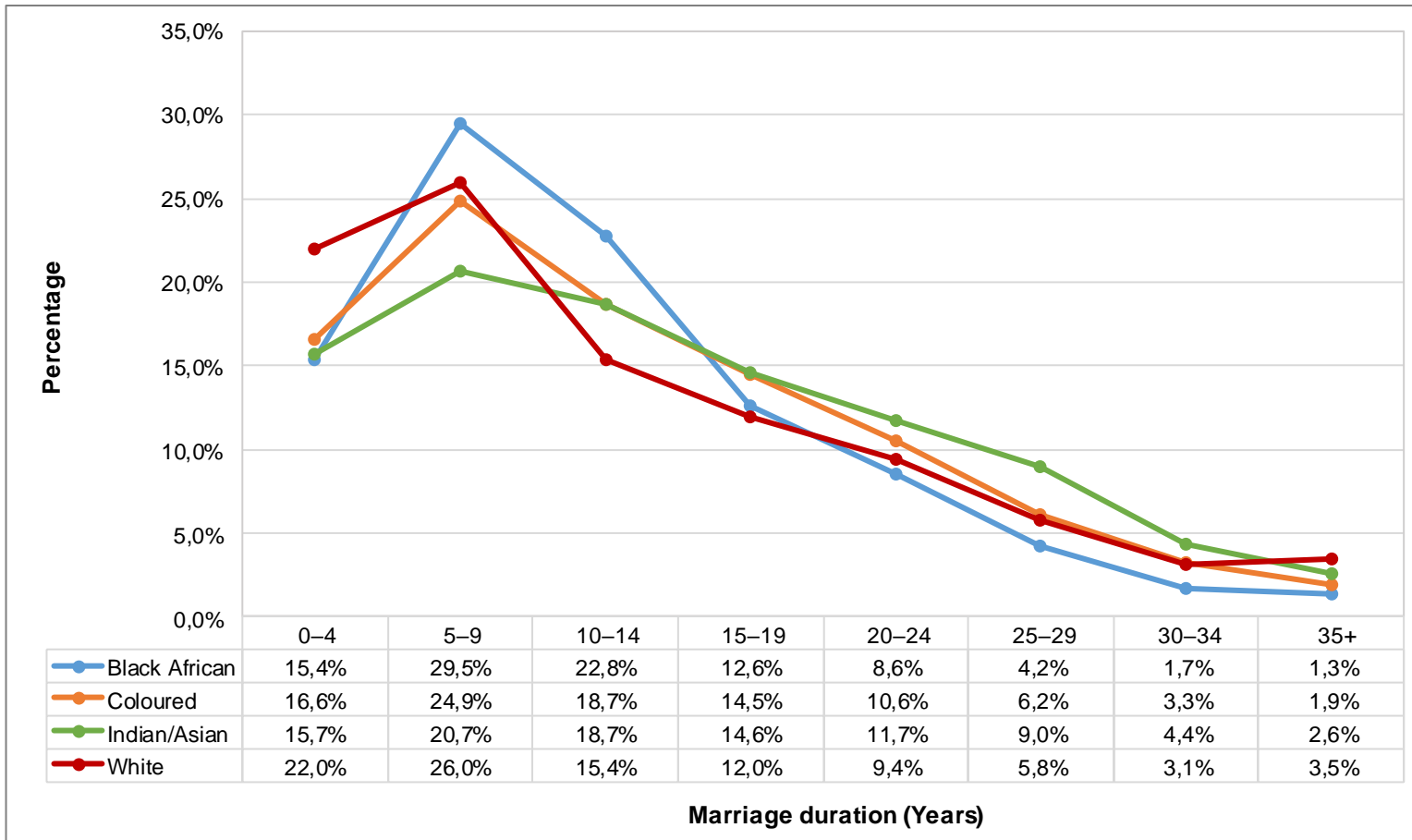


**Figure 11 – The proportions of divorces by age and population group (males), 2017**

**Figure 12 – The proportions of divorces by age group and population group (females), 2017**



**Figure 13 – The proportions of divorces by duration of marriage and population group, 2017**





**Table 1 – Number of registered civil marriages in South Africa, 2008 – 2017**

<b>Year of registration</b>	<b>Number of civil marriages</b>
<b>2008</b>	186 522
<b>2009</b>	171 989
<b>2010</b>	170 826
<b>2011</b>	167 264
<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

**Table 2 – Number and percentage distribution of civil marriages by province of marriage registration and way of solemnisation, 2017**

Province of registration	Grand Total	Way of solemnisation			%			
		DHA	Religious	Unspecified	Total	DHA	Religious	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>135 458</b>	<b>78 768</b>	<b>38 981</b>	<b>17 709</b>	100,0	58,1	28,8	13,1
Western Cape	22 144	9 540	11 230	1 374	100,0	43,1	50,7	6,2
Eastern Cape	14 550	7 564	4 444	2 542	100,0	52,0	30,5	17,5
Northern Cape	3 950	1 998	1 010	942	100,0	50,6	25,6	23,8
Free State	9 479	7 414	1 922	143	100,0	78,2	20,3	1,5
KwaZulu-Natal	21 206	11 687	6 795	2 724	100,0	55,1	32,0	12,8
North West	9 238	7 479	1 655	104	100,0	81,0	17,9	1,1
Gauteng	35 359	20 914	8 279	6 166	100,0	59,1	23,4	17,4
Mpumalanga	7 071	2 981	1 979	2 111	100,0	42,2	28,0	29,9
Limpopo	9 894	7 375	1 087	1 432	100,0	74,5	11,0	14,5
Outside RSA	418	388	24	6	100,0	92,8	5,7	1,4
Unknown	35	19	12	4	100,0	54,3	34,3	11,4
Unspecified	2 114	1 409	544	161	100,0	66,7	25,7	7,6

**Table 3 – Number of civil marriages by province of registration and marital status of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2017**

Province of registration	Bridegroom					Bride				
	Total	Never married men	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never married women	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>135 458</b>	<b>111 306</b>	<b>5 074</b>	<b>1 171</b>	<b>17 907</b>	<b>135 458</b>	<b>117 779</b>	<b>3 227</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>13 556</b>
Western Cape	22 144	17 540	817	27	3 760	22 144	18 419	660	19	3 046
Eastern Cape	14 550	12 012	594	96	1 848	14 550	12 853	358	59	1 280
Northern Cape	3 950	3 303	190	20	437	3 950	3 474	135	15	326
Free State	9 479	7 775	460	76	1 168	9 479	8 222	296	122	839
KwaZulu-Natal	21 206	17 961	782	276	2 187	21 206	19 022	374	154	1 656
North West	9 238	7 766	378	42	1 052	9 238	8 228	248	43	719
Gauteng	35 359	28 331	1 213	309	5 506	35 359	29 846	825	283	4 405
Mpumalanga	7 071	5 945	253	101	772	7 071	6 257	162	73	579
Limpopo	9 894	8 514	312	162	906	9 894	9 163	126	77	528
Outside RSA	418	351	7	-	60	418	368	2	2	46
Unknown	35	27	1	1	6	35	29	1	-	5
Unspecified	2 114	1 781	67	61	205	2 114	1 898	40	49	127

**Table 4 – Number of civil marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage and marital status of husband, 2017**

Age differences	Grand Total	Never married to					Divorcee to				
		Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>135 458</b>	111 306	104 859	1 151	643	4 653	<b>5 074</b>	3 017	826	43	1 188
Bridegroom Older	<b>103 901</b>	84 016	80 790	565	517	2 144	<b>4 438</b>	2 788	637	37	976
Bridegroom Younger	<b>21 144</b>	18 003	15 287	509	88	2 119	<b>494</b>	169	154	2	169
Same Age	<b>10 412</b>	9 286	8 781	77	38	390	<b>142</b>	60	35	4	43
Unspecified	<b>1</b>	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Age differences	Widower					Unspecified				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 171</b>	949	27	167	28	<b>17 907</b>	8 954	1 223	43	7 687
Bridegroom Older	<b>1 032</b>	842	22	144	24	<b>14 415</b>	7 977	816	35	5 587
Bridegroom Younger	<b>89</b>	73	2	12	2	<b>2 558</b>	647	315	6	1 590
Same Age	<b>50</b>	34	3	11	2	<b>934</b>	330	92	2	510

**Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2017**

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>135 458</b>	<b>111 306</b>	<b>5 074</b>	<b>1 171</b>	<b>17 907</b>	<b>135 458</b>	<b>117 779</b>	<b>3 227</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>13 556</b>
<b>&lt;18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
18	15	15	-	-	-	245	230	1	12	2
19	64	64	-	-	-	571	551	1	17	2
<b>18-19</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>816</b>	<b>781</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>4</b>
20	197	197	-	-	-	1 054	1 031	1	20	2
21	421	408	-	11	2	1 779	1 738	-	40	1
22	818	810	-	7	1	2 690	2 621	5	55	9
23	1 353	1 337	3	13	-	3 675	3 601	2	54	18
24	2 233	2 207	1	20	5	4 957	4 874	9	51	23
<b>20-24</b>	<b>5 022</b>	<b>4 959</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14 155</b>	<b>13 865</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>53</b>
25	3 092	3 046	2	33	11	6 134	6 023	7	38	66
26	4 189	4 122	1	38	28	6 922	6 791	5	34	92
27	4 921	4 851	4	27	39	7 581	7 402	9	37	133
28	5 431	5 326	4	37	64	7 449	7 224	12	28	185
29	5 532	5 411	5	26	90	7 151	6 911	14	26	200
<b>25-29</b>	<b>23 165</b>	<b>22 756</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>35 237</b>	<b>34 351</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>676</b>
30	5 767	5 626	13	19	109	6 884	6 570	24	23	267
31	6 181	5 966	10	17	188	6 697	6 315	32	12	338
32	6 302	6 009	14	17	262	6 404	5 970	40	18	376
33	5 952	5 634	23	14	281	6 009	5 494	46	15	454
34	5 774	5 356	26	14	378	5 625	5 101	65	6	453
<b>30-34</b>	<b>29 976</b>	<b>28 591</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>1 218</b>	<b>31 619</b>	<b>29 450</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>1 888</b>

**Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2017 (continued)**

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
35	5 946	5 444	35	8	459	5 195	4 609	50	5	531
36	5 156	4 669	37	12	438	4 435	3 871	74	6	484
37	4 963	4 416	38	7	502	4 142	3 556	75	5	506
38	4 719	4 162	54	7	496	3 650	3 075	70	4	501
39	4 157	3 592	53	3	509	3 286	2 743	72	4	467
<b>35-39</b>	<b>24 941</b>	<b>22 283</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>2 404</b>	<b>20 708</b>	<b>17 854</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2 489</b>
40	4 152	3 477	72	3	600	3 074	2 458	81	4	531
41	4 012	3 257	90	3	662	2 858	2 268	93	1	496
42	3 818	3 072	98	6	642	2 761	2 165	96	3	497
43	3 381	2 612	107	3	659	2 419	1 782	97	2	538
44	3 129	2 311	115	3	700	2 276	1 591	114	-	571
<b>40-44</b>	<b>18 492</b>	<b>14 729</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3 263</b>	<b>13 388</b>	<b>10 264</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2 633</b>
45	3 139	2 205	153	-	781	2 234	1 534	129	1	570
46	2 506	1 654	135	1	716	1 709	1 110	97	3	499
47	2 654	1 779	153	1	721	1 798	1 144	135	-	519
48	2 215	1 383	134	16	682	1 490	948	113	4	425
49	2 200	1 298	150	20	732	1 457	892	94	8	463
<b>45-49</b>	<b>12 714</b>	<b>8 319</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>3 632</b>	<b>8 688</b>	<b>5 628</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2 476</b>
50	1 963	1 056	161	15	731	1 183	672	93	7	411
51	1 692	907	145	29	611	1 106	605	111	10	380
52	1 615	832	167	39	577	1 037	594	100	20	323
53	1 581	780	171	50	580	911	515	93	29	274
54	1 496	704	195	60	537	851	464	92	31	264
<b>50-54</b>	<b>8 347</b>	<b>4 279</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>3 036</b>	<b>5 088</b>	<b>2 850</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>1 652</b>

**Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2017 (concluded)**

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
55	1 332	628	186	48	470	718	377	94	19	228
56	1 076	445	144	54	433	626	293	84	21	228
57	1 122	471	169	45	437	610	300	88	26	196
58	1 006	443	148	42	373	491	258	63	18	152
59	940	364	160	52	364	465	238	66	24	137
<b>55-59</b>	<b>5 476</b>	<b>2 351</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>2 077</b>	<b>2 910</b>	<b>1 466</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>941</b>
60	899	388	152	52	307	407	185	64	27	131
61	778	322	164	42	250	363	180	60	22	101
62	677	257	152	41	227	289	123	62	17	87
63	622	262	137	28	195	260	105	62	17	76
64	636	269	151	35	181	219	86	59	10	64
<b>60-64</b>	<b>3 612</b>	<b>1 498</b>	<b>756</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>1 160</b>	<b>1 538</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>459</b>
65	591	272	119	24	176	205	103	35	8	59
66	357	142	102	12	101	141	52	43	5	41
67	401	154	120	16	111	150	69	40	11	30
68	342	140	102	12	88	117	40	33	8	36
69	257	93	86	16	62	110	49	29	4	28
<b>65-69</b>	<b>1 948</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>70+</b>	<b>1 683</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Unspecified</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

**Table 6 – Number of registered customary marriages in South Africa, 2008 – 2017**

<b>Year of registration</b>	<b>Number of marriages</b>
2008	16 003
2009	13 506
2010	9 996
2011	5 084
2012	4 555
2013	3 498
2014	3 062
2015	3 467
2016	3 978
2017	2 588



**Table 7 – Number and percentage distribution of customary marriages by province of marriage registration and age difference, 2017**

Province of registration	Number				%			
	Total	Bridegroom Older	Bridegroom Younger	Same Age	Total	Bridegroom Older	Bridegroom Younger	Same Age
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 588</b>	<b>2 223</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>85,9</b>	<b>9,7</b>	<b>4,4</b>
<b>Western Cape</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>85,7</b>	<b>10,1</b>	<b>4,2</b>
<b>Northern Cape</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Free State</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>90,9</b>	<b>9,1</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	<b>1 452</b>	<b>1 235</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>85,1</b>	<b>10,1</b>	<b>4,9</b>
<b>North West</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>94,4</b>	<b>2,8</b>	<b>2,8</b>
<b>Gauteng</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>82,4</b>	<b>14,2</b>	<b>3,4</b>
<b>Mpumalanga</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>82,4</b>	<b>11,1</b>	<b>6,5</b>
<b>Limpopo</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>88,8</b>	<b>7,9</b>	<b>3,4</b>
<b>Outside RSA</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>83,3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>16,7</b>
<b>Unknown</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>87,8</b>	<b>8,2</b>	<b>4,1</b>
<b>Unspecified</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

**Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2017**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Bridegrooms</b>	<b>Brides</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 588</b>	<b>2 588</b>
<b>&lt;18</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>77</b>
18	6	70
19	19	74
<b>18-19</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>144</b>
20	28	111
21	30	93
22	57	126
23	53	119
24	88	119
<b>20-24</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>568</b>
25	82	120
26	99	109
27	96	126
28	96	117
29	94	98
<b>25-29</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>570</b>
30	97	98
31	102	97
32	97	92
33	102	81
34	91	67
<b>30-34</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>435</b>

**Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2017 (continued)**

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
35	102	65
36	76	71
37	76	58
38	80	49
39	70	51
<b>35-39</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>294</b>
40	90	44
41	70	45
42	53	47
43	68	39
44	42	42
<b>40-44</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>217</b>
45	57	33
46	55	33
47	42	27
48	43	18
49	37	18
<b>45-49</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>129</b>
50	30	17
51	37	14
52	21	14
53	32	11
54	26	15
<b>50-54</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>71</b>

**Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2017 (concluded)**

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
55	18	7
56	25	10
57	17	6
58	14	9
59	24	8
<b>55-59</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>40</b>
60	13	9
61	11	6
62	12	4
63	9	1
64	11	6
<b>60-64</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>26</b>
65	10	1
66	11	2
67	10	3
68	8	-
69	5	-
<b>65-69</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>70+</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>11</b>

**Table 9 – Number and percentage distribution of civil unions registered by province of registration, 2013 – 2017**

Province of registration	Number					%				
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>993</b>	<b>1 144</b>	<b>1 185</b>	<b>1 331</b>	<b>1 357</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Western Cape	320	314	346	358	391	32,2	27,5	29,2	26,9	28,8
Eastern Cape	37	54	49	57	57	3,7	4,7	4,1	4,3	4,2
Northern Cape	87	81	10	15	16	8,8	7,1	0,8	1,1	1,2
Free State	21	32	41	36	42	2,1	2,8	3,5	2,7	3,1
KwaZulu-Natal	81	161	220	249	245	8,2	14,1	18,6	18,7	18,1
North West	10	28	25	29	43	1,0	2,5	2,1	2,2	3,2
Gauteng	411	452	443	494	507	41,4	39,5	37,4	37,1	37,4
Mpumalanga	16	9	24	22	32	1,6	0,8	2,0	1,7	2,4
Limpopo	6	10	16	17	15	0,6	0,9	1,4	1,3	1,1
Outside South Africa	4	3	4	4	3	0,4	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,2
Unspecified	-	-	7	50	6	-	-	0,6	3,8	0,4

**Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2017**

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 357</b>	<b>1 357</b>
20	4	6
21	6	9
22	8	22
23	13	27
24	16	35
<b>20-24</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>99</b>
25	28	47
26	38	60
27	39	65
28	68	74
29	63	84
<b>25-29</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>330</b>
30	68	67
31	77	67
32	56	61
33	73	59
34	58	68
<b>30-34</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>322</b>

**Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2017 (continued)**

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
35	66	63
36	54	41
37	53	44
38	41	35
39	30	31
<b>35-39</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>214</b>
40	45	40
41	43	31
42	32	24
43	27	27
44	31	30
<b>40-44</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>152</b>
45	23	30
46	31	17
47	32	16
48	27	22
49	15	20
<b>45-49</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>105</b>
50	21	12
51	18	12
52	17	9
53	14	13
54	11	11
<b>50-54</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>57</b>

**Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2017 (concluded)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Spouse-1</b>	<b>Spouse-2</b>
55	15	8
56	7	10
57	14	7
58	8	8
59	9	4
<b>55-59</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>37</b>
60	10	6
61	5	-
62	2	6
63	2	5
64	4	5
<b>60-64</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>22</b>
65	3	2
66	3	1
67	1	3
68	4	2
69	6	-
<b>65-69</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>70+</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>



**Table 11 – Number and percentage distribution of published divorces in South Africa by population group, 2008 – 2017**

Year	Total	Numbers						%						
		Black African	Coloured	India/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified	Total	Black African	Coloured	India/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified
<b>2008</b>	<b>28 924</b>	10 110	3 057	1 802	9 481	902	3 572	<b>100,0</b>	35,0	10,6	6,2	32,8	3,1	12,3
<b>2009</b>	<b>30 763</b>	10 528	4 016	1 610	9 981	2 912	1 716	<b>100,0</b>	34,2	13,1	5,2	32,4	9,5	5,6
<b>2010</b>	<b>22 936</b>	8 169	3 189	1 294	6 995	31	3 258	<b>100,0</b>	35,6	13,9	5,6	30,5	0,1	14,2
<b>2011</b>	<b>20 980</b>	7 517	3 473	1 359	6 730	-	1 901	<b>100,0</b>	35,8	16,6	6,5	32,1	-	9,1
<b>2012</b>	<b>21 998</b>	7 311	3 967	1 036	7 238	22	2 424	<b>100,0</b>	33,2	18,0	4,7	32,9	0,1	11,0
<b>2013</b>	<b>23 885</b>	8 656	3 888	1 425	7 561	24	2 331	<b>100,0</b>	36,2	16,3	6,0	31,7	0,1	9,8
<b>2014</b>	<b>24 689</b>	9 167	4 994	1 522	6 970	842	1 194	<b>100,0</b>	37,1	20,2	6,2	28,2	3,4	4,8
<b>2015</b>	<b>25 260</b>	10 841	4 213	1 566	6 588	837	1 215	<b>100,0</b>	42,9	16,7	6,2	26,1	3,3	4,8
<b>2016</b>	<b>25 326</b>	10 641	4 711	1 529	6 293	841	1 311	<b>100,0</b>	42,0	18,6	6,0	24,8	3,3	5,2
<b>2017</b>	<b>25 390</b>	11 309	4 517	1 401	6 048	833	1 282	<b>100,0</b>	44,5	17,8	5,5	23,8	3,3	5,0

**Table 12 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by type of occupation at the time of divorce, 2017**

Occupation	Number		%	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>25 390</b>	<b>25 390</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Professionals, semi-professionals and technical occupations	3 481	3 959	13,7	15,6
Managers and administrators	3 530	2 038	13,9	8,0
Clerical and sales occupations	1 324	2 717	5,2	10,7
Transport delivery and communications	905	59	3,6	0,2
Services occupations	1 898	1 812	7,5	7,1
Farming and related occupations	121	24	0,5	0,1
Artisans apprentice and related occupations	1 533	205	6,0	0,8
Production foreman mine and quarry worker	1 089	484	4,3	1,9
Not economically active	4 575	6 279	18,0	24,7
Unspecified	6 934	7 813	27,3	30,8

**Table 13 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and plaintiff, 2017**

Population group	Number					%				
	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>25 390</b>	<b>8 878</b>	<b>12 938</b>	<b>1 728</b>	<b>1 846</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>35,0</b>	<b>51,0</b>	<b>6,8</b>	<b>7,3</b>
Black African	11 309	4 277	5 104	1 145	783	100,0	37,8	45,1	10,1	6,9
Coloured	4 517	1 464	2 540	195	318	100,0	32,4	56,2	4,3	7,0
Indian/Asian	1 401	479	793	57	72	100,0	34,2	56,6	4,1	5,1
White	6 048	2 022	3 521	233	272	100,0	33,4	58,2	3,9	4,5
Mixed	833	234	448	71	80	100,0	28,1	53,8	8,5	9,6
Unspecified	1 282	402	532	27	321	100,0	31,4	41,5	2,1	25,0

**Table 14 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by province of divorce registration and plaintiff, 2017**

Province of divorce registration	Number					%				
	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>25 390</b>	<b>8 878</b>	<b>12 938</b>	<b>1 728</b>	<b>1 846</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>35,0</b>	<b>51,0</b>	<b>6,8</b>	<b>7,3</b>
Western Cape	6 050	2 022	3 353	251	424	100,0	33,4	55,4	4,1	7,0
Eastern Cape	3 285	1 028	1 621	486	150	100,0	31,3	49,3	14,8	4,6
Northern Cape	768	250	325	4	189	100,0	32,6	42,3	0,5	24,6
Free State	2 254	959	1 183	42	70	100,0	42,5	52,5	1,9	3,1
KwaZulu-Natal	4 349	1 575	2 106	306	362	100,0	36,2	48,4	7,0	8,3
North West	426	175	219	12	20	100,0	41,1	51,4	2,8	4,7
Gauteng	6 046	2 003	3 048	477	518	100,0	33,1	50,4	7,9	8,6
Mpumalanga	997	361	499	81	56	100,0	36,2	50,1	8,1	5,6
Limpopo	1 215	505	584	69	57	100,0	41,6	48,1	5,7	4,7

**Table 15 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and way of solemnisation of the marriage, 2017**

Population group	Number				%			
	Total	Religious	DHA	Unspecified	Total	Religious	DHA	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 390</b>	<b>11 675</b>	<b>11 275</b>	<b>2 440</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>46,0</b>	<b>44,4</b>	<b>9,6</b>
Black African	11 309	3 229	7 477	603	100,0	28,6	66,1	5,3
Coloured	4 517	2 979	1 178	360	100,0	66,0	26,1	8,0
Indian/Asian	1 401	492	729	180	100,0	35,1	52,0	12,8
White	6 048	4 169	1 070	809	100,0	68,9	17,7	13,4
Mixed	833	319	429	85	100,0	38,3	51,5	10,2
Unspecified	1 282	487	392	403	100,0	38,0	30,6	31,4

**Table 16 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by number of times married at the time of divorce, 2017**

Number of times married	Number		%	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 390</b>	<b>25 390</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Once	21 224	21 531	83,6	84,8
Twice	2 940	2 539	11,6	10,0
Three or more	358	306	1,4	1,2
Unspecified	868	1 014	3,4	4,0

**Table 17 – Number of divorces by age and population group (male divorcees), 2017**

Age group	Population group						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 390</b>	<b>11 684</b>	<b>4 741</b>	<b>1 603</b>	<b>6 260</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>1 020</b>
<25	100	8	22	14	52	-	4
25-29	905	186	234	99	357	1	28
30-34	2 759	1 002	625	248	774	11	99
35-39	4 161	1 951	853	279	927	7	144
40-44	4 817	2 334	934	319	1 042	9	179
45-49	4 583	2 280	830	230	1 057	8	178
50-54	3 264	1 644	572	194	723	8	123
55-59	2 025	979	323	82	549	3	89
60-64	1 078	528	141	38	312	1	58
65-69	555	273	79	15	165	-	23
70-74	224	90	29	5	91	-	9
75-79	94	40	9	2	40	-	3
80+	50	30	7	-	12	-	1
Unspecified	775	339	83	78	159	34	82

**Table 18 – Number of divorces by age group and population group (female divorcees), 2017**

Age group	Population						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 390</b>	<b>11 589</b>	<b>4 945</b>	<b>1 509</b>	<b>6 159</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1 163</b>
<25	371	82	77	39	157	1	15
25-29	2 038	741	445	158	617	1	76
30-34	4 229	1 994	822	277	973	3	160
35-39	4 949	2 579	924	277	966	3	200
40-44	4 675	2 298	876	284	1 010	4	203
45-49	3 752	1 751	722	212	898	1	168
50-54	2 393	1 006	542	122	603	2	118
55-59	1 316	527	256	59	401	-	73
60-64	605	230	114	22	212	1	26
65-69	232	83	43	8	86	-	12
70-74	88	30	12	1	43	-	2
75-79	31	11	4	1	14	-	1
80+	10	2	2	-	6	-	-
Unspecified	701	255	106	49	173	9	109

**Table 19 – Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (male divorcees), 2017**

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>25 390</b>	<b>4 424</b>	<b>6 906</b>	<b>4 985</b>	<b>3 236</b>	<b>2 321</b>	<b>1 319</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>1 052</b>
<25	100	91	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
25-29	905	615	253	7	-	-	-	-	-	30
30-34	2 759	1 081	1 360	213	4	-	1	-	-	100
35-39	4 161	869	1 867	1 081	191	8	1	4	2	138
40-44	4 817	637	1 401	1 485	867	249	11	5	6	156
45-49	4 583	436	818	1 083	1 023	785	222	3	8	205
50-54	3 264	254	437	471	584	669	518	152	10	169
55-59	2 025	145	269	230	260	318	343	269	99	92
60-64	1 078	80	136	130	126	143	113	119	177	54
65-69	555	42	61	72	63	64	49	46	130	28
70-74	224	25	36	22	25	28	20	12	48	8
75-79	94	10	18	15	7	12	9	4	14	5
80+	50	6	7	8	6	8	2	2	8	3
Unspecified	775	133	239	168	80	37	30	10	19	59

**Table 20 – Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (female divorcees), 2017**

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>25 390</b>	<b>4 424</b>	<b>6 906</b>	<b>4 985</b>	<b>3 236</b>	<b>2 321</b>	<b>1 319</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>1 052</b>
<25	371	306	45	-	-	-	-	-	-	20
25-29	2 038	1 083	851	38	-	-	2	-	-	64
30-34	4 229	1 132	2 129	765	38	-	-	9	-	156
35-39	4 949	710	1 696	1 732	578	47	1	-	5	180
40-44	4 675	480	956	1 190	1 216	592	58	-	7	176
45-49	3 752	300	502	610	789	901	435	41	9	165
50-54	2 393	166	276	296	298	463	484	253	33	124
55-59	1 316	81	154	134	142	160	211	219	156	59
60-64	605	30	62	55	67	68	70	67	165	21
65-69	232	13	23	21	22	21	16	16	88	12
70-74	88	10	12	7	5	9	4	5	30	6
75-79	31	2	5	5	3	4	3	2	7	-
80+	10	1	2	3	1	-	-	2	1	-
Unspecified	701	110	193	129	77	56	35	12	20	69



**Table 21 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and divorces with and without children (aged below 18 years), 2017**

Population group	Total	Divorces with children	Divorces without children	Unspecified	Total	Divorces with children	Divorces without children	Unspecified
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 390</b>	<b>14 121</b>	<b>11 266</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>55,6</b>	<b>44,4</b>	<b>0,0</b>
Black African	11 309	6 896	4 412	1	100,0	61,0	39,0	0,0
Coloured	4 517	2 781	1 736	-	100,0	61,6	38,4	-
Indian/Asian	1 401	762	639	-	100,0	54,4	45,6	-
White	6 048	2 702	3 346	-	100,0	44,7	55,3	-
Mixed	833	418	415	-	100,0	50,2	49,8	-
Unspecified	1 282	562	718	2	100,0	43,8	56,0	0,2

**Table 22 – Number and percentage distribution of population group by children (aged below 18 years) affected by divorces, 2017**

Population group	Total number of children involved	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23 170</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Black African	11 481	49,6
Coloured	4 643	20,0
Indian/Asian	1 156	5,0
White	4 322	18,7
Mixed	679	2,9
Unspecified	889	3,8

## 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 2017. 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 by end of December, 2018.

### 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 2017 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 2017, Stats SA received and processed 25 390 (90,5%) of the 28 060 divorces granted at the DOJ&CD.

### 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

Bongaarts, J. 1978. A Framework for Analyzing the Proximate Determinants of Fertility. Population and Development Review. Vol 4(1): 105-132.

Statistics South Africa. 2017. *Mid-year population estimates*, (statistical release P0302). Pretoria. Available at <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022017.pdf>

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Marriages and divorces, 2017

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