

STATISTICAL RELEASE

P0307

Marriages and divorces

2016

Embargoed until:
30 May 2018
09:00

ENQUIRIES:

User Information Services
Tel: (012) 310 8600 / 4892 / 8390

FORTHCOMING ISSUE:

Marriages and divorces, 2017

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE:

February 2019

www.statssa.gov.za
info@statssa.gov.za
T +27 12 310 8911
F +27 12 310 8500

Private Bag X44, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa
ISibalo House, Koch Street, Salvokop, Pretoria, 0002



PREFACE

This statistical release presents information on civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions that were registered in 2016 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 2016 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.

Risenga Maluleke
Statistician-General

CONTENTS

PREFACE	i
LIST OF FIGURES	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
KEY FINDINGS	1
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Marriages.....	2
2.1 Civil marriages.....	2
2.1.1 Trends in the registration of civil marriages (2003–2016).....	2
2.1.2 Solemnisation of civil marriages.....	2
2.1.3 Marital status at the time of civil marriage.....	3
2.1.4 Age at the time of civil marriage.....	3
2.2 Customary marriages.....	4
2.2.1 Trends in the registration of customary marriages (2003–2016).....	4
2.2.2 Marital status at the time of customary marriage.....	4
2.2.3 Age at the time of customary marriage.....	4
2.3 Civil unions.....	5
2.3.1 Trends in the registration of civil unions (2012–2016).....	5
2.3.2 Marital status at the time of civil union.....	5
2.3.3 Age at the time of civil union.....	5
3. Divorces.....	6
3.1 Trends in divorces (2003–2016).....	6
3.2 Characteristics of plaintiffs.....	6
3.3 Number of divorces by way of solemnisation of marriage.....	6
3.4 Number of times married.....	7
3.5 Age at the time of divorce.....	7
3.6 Duration of marriage of divorcing couples.....	7
3.7 Divorces involving couples with minor children.....	7
4. Summary and concluding remarks.....	8
EXPLANATORY NOTES	44
1. Purpose of the statistical release.....	44
2. Scope and coverage.....	44
3. Data.....	44
4. Limitations.....	44
5. Definitions of terms.....	44
6. Symbols.....	45
7. Reference.....	45
GENERAL INFORMATION	46

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – Number of civil marriages by month of solemnisation, 2012–2016	9
Figure 2 – Number of civil marriages for bachelors and spinsters by age group, 2016.....	10
Figure 3a – Median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of civil marriage, 2012–2016	11
Figure 3b – Median ages of bachelors and spinsters at the time of civil marriage, 2012–2016	11
Figure 3c – Median ages of widowers and widows at the time of civil marriage, 2012–2016	12
Figure 3d – Median ages of male and female divorcees at the time of civil marriage, 2012–2016	12
Figure 4a – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (bachelors), 2016	13
Figure 4b – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (widowers), 2016	13
Figure 4c – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (male divorcees), 2016.....	14
Figure 5 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by year of marriage and time it took to register the marriage, 2012–2016	14
Figure 6 – Median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of customary marriage, 2012–2016.....	15
Figure 7 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage, 2012–2016	15
Figure 8 – Median ages of spouses in civil unions, 2012–2016.....	16
Figure 9 – Percentage distribution of civil unions by age differences between spouses at the time of union, 2012–2016.....	16
Figure 10 – Median ages of divorcees by sex and population group, 2016.....	17
Figure 11 – The proportions of divorces by age and population group (males), 2016.....	17
Figure 12 – The proportions of divorces by age group and population group (females), 2016	18
Figure 13 – The proportions of divorces by duration of marriage and population group, 2016	18

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 –	Number of registered civil marriages in South Africa, 2003–2016.....	19
Table 2 –	Number and percentage distribution of civil marriages by province of marriage registration and way of solemnisation, 2016.....	20
Table 3 –	Number of civil marriages by province of registration and marital status of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2016.....	21
Table 4 –	Number of civil marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage and marital status of husband, 2016.....	22
Table 5 –	Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2016.....	23
Table 6 –	Number of registered customary marriages in South Africa, 2003–2016.....	26
Table 7 –	Number and percentage distribution of customary marriages by province of marriage registration and age difference, 2016.....	27
Table 8 –	Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2016.....	28
Table 9 –	Number and percentage distribution of civil unions registered by province of registration, 2012–2016.....	31
Table 10 –	Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2016.....	32
Table 11 –	Number and percentage distribution of published divorces in South Africa by population group, 2003 – 2016.....	35
Table 12 –	Number and percentage distribution of divorces by type of occupation at the time of divorce, 2016.....	36
Table 13 –	Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and plaintiff, 2016.....	37
Table 14 –	Number and percentage distribution of divorces by province of divorce registration and plaintiff, 2016.....	37
Table 15 –	Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and way of solemnisation of the marriage, 2016.....	38
Table 16 –	Number and percentage distribution of divorces by number of times married at the time of divorce, 2016.....	38
Table 17 –	Number of divorces by age and population group (male divorcees), 2016.....	39
Table 18 –	Number of divorces by age group and population group (female divorcees), 2016.....	40
Table 19 –	Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (male divorcees), 2016.....	41
Table 20 –	Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (female divorcees), 2016.....	42
Table 21 –	Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and divorces with and without children (aged below 18 years), 2016.....	43
Table 22 –	Number and percentage distribution of population group by children (aged below 18 years) affected by divorces, 2016.....	43

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 on marriages and divorces in the country. Census and survey data are by nature subjective individual information that provides cross-sectional data on individuals' marital status (never married, married, divorced, widowed, etc). However, not all types of marriages and divorces are registered. Therefore, marriages and divorces in this context cover different types of marriages and associated divorces that took place at different periods in people's lives.

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 marriages 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 to manage 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) governs civil unions (relationships between same-sex couples that are legally recognised by a state authority), and it came into operation on 30 November 2006. 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* (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 (2003 – 2016)

Information provided in Table 1 on page 19 shows that a total of 139 512 civil marriages of South African citizens and permanent residents were registered at the Department of Home Affairs in 2016. This number includes 372 (0,3%) marriages of South African citizens and permanent residents that were solemnised outside the borders of South Africa but subsequently registered in South Africa. The table further shows that the number of registered marriages fluctuated between 2003 and 2008, after which there was a consistent decline. During the period 2003 to 2016, the highest number of marriages was recorded in 2008 (186 522) and the lowest number in 2015 (138 627). The 2016 figure of 139 512 civil marriages shows an increase of 0,6% from the 138 627 marriages recorded in 2015. In 2016, the observed crude civil marriage rate was 2,5 per 1 000 estimated resident population¹.

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. The results also show that solemnisation of marriages shows a second peak in either March or April depending on the month of the Easter holiday for that particular year. An interesting observation is the fairly stable pattern in October month over the years (13 491 to 13 677 between 2012 and 2016). In 2016, the highest number of marriages [18 262 (13,1%)] took place in December and the lowest number of marriages, [9 077 (6,5%)] occurred in January. The number of marriages in December were double that for January 2016. 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

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

Table 2 on page 20 shows the distribution of civil marriages registered in 2016 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, 80 748 (57,9%) of the 139 512 marriages were solemnised by DHA marriage officers and 43 359 (31,1%) by 'Religious' rites. The type of solemnisation rite was not specified in 15 405 (11,0%) marriages.

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 2016, the highest number of marriages was registered in Gauteng [36 413 (26,1%)] and the lowest in Northern Cape [4 278 (3,1%)]. Looking at ways of marriage solemnisation within each province, North West had the highest proportion of marriages, 80,2% (7 775) solemnised by civil marriage officers. Western Cape recorded the highest proportion, 48,8% (10 034) of marriages solemnised by religious marriage officers. Wide differences of 'unspecified' way of solemnisation by province were noted. For example, 30,9% (2 365) of marriages in Mpumalanga had 'unspecified' method of solemnisation compared with 1,6% (152) in North West.

¹ 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 21 shows the number of civil marriages for bridegrooms and brides by marital status at the time of marriages and province of registration. The table indicates that the majority of the marriages in 2016 for both bridegrooms and brides were first-time marriages in all provinces. For bridegrooms, there were 113 738 (81,5%) bachelors, 5 151 (3,7%) divorcees and 1 343 (1,0%) widowers. For the brides, 120 501 (86,4%) were spinsters whilst 3 337 (2,4%) were divorcees and 1 044 (0,7%) were widows. The marital status of 19 280 (13,8%) bridegrooms and 14 630 (10,5%) brides were unspecified. A high proportion of marriages between bridegrooms and brides marrying for the first time was observed in Limpopo where 86,0% and 92,3% were bachelors and spinsters respectively. The profile of those that were remarrying showed that remarriages were more prevalent in divorcees as compared to the widowed.

The number of marriages by marital status of husband and age differences between spouses are shown on Table 4 on page 22. It is observed that irrespective of their marital status, men generally married women who had never been married (spinsters). Thus 106 854 (93,9%) of bachelors married spinsters, 1 140 (1,0%) married divorcees and 769 (0,7%) married widows. In addition, irrespective of the fact that more divorcees and widowers married spinsters, the proportion of male divorcees who married female divorcees 902 (17,5%) was higher than the proportion that married widows 38 (0,7%). Similarly, the proportion of widowers who married widows 195 (14,5%) was higher than the proportion that married female divorcees 32 (3,0%).

Table 4 suggests that men tend to marry younger women, thus 106 635 (76,4%) of the 139 512 bridegrooms were older than their brides. Nevertheless, 21 919 (15,7%) bridegrooms were younger than their brides and 10 956 (7,9%) were of the same age as their brides. This observed age pattern is the same irrespective of the marital status of the bridegroom at the time of marriage (see Figures 4a to 4c on pages 13–14). However, the magnitude differs by the marital status of the spouses at the time of marriage. For example, 43,2% of bachelors who married divorcees were younger than their brides (see Figure 4a) and 5,3% of male divorcees who married widowed women were also younger than their brides (see Figure 4c). A relatively smaller percentage (4,8%) was observed for male divorcees marrying spinsters who were older than them (see Figure 4c).

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 under 18 years and girls under 16 years of age require the consent of the Minister of Home Affairs before they can marry.

In 2016, marriages of 4 bridegrooms and 99 brides aged less than 18 years were registered, with 3 bachelors and 94 spinsters (see Table 5 on page 23). Figure 2 on page 10 indicates that the highest number of bachelors [30 418 (26,7%)] were aged 30–34 years whereas the highest number of spinsters [35 632 (29,6%)] were aged 25–29 years. There were more spinsters compared to bachelors at younger ages (less than 30 years) and vice versa at older ages (35 years and older).

Figure 3a on page 11 shows the median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage. Median ages of bridegrooms increased from 34 years in 2012 to 36 years in 2016 and those for brides increased from 30 years to 32 years during the same period. Figure 3a to Figure 3d on pages 11 and 12 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, followed by those widowed and highest for divorcees.

For the first time marriages, the median ages for bachelors and spinsters were 34 years and 31 years respectively in 2016, giving an age difference of three years (see Figure 3b). For remarriages, the median ages for widowers and widows in 2016 (see Figure 3c) were 54 years and 30 years respectively, resulting in a 24-year age gap. The median ages for widowers consistently increased every year from 49 years in 2012 to 54 years in 2016, with the exception of 2014 where it decreased by a year from the 2013 median age, to 49. The median ages of widows decreased by two years from 32 years in 2015 to 30 years in 2016.

The median ages at marriage for divorcees are shown in Figure 3d. It is observed that the median ages for male divorcees increased gradually over time. The median ages of male divorcees increased from 52 years in 2012 to 55 years in 2016. In comparison, the median age of female divorcee showed two years increase from 47 years in 2012 to 49 years in 2016. There was a six-year age difference in the median ages between male and female divorcees in 2016.

2.2 Customary marriages

2.2.1 Trends in the registration of customary marriages (2003–2016)

In 2016, 3 978 customary marriages were registered at the Department of Home Affairs, indicating an increase of 14,7% from 3 467 customary marriages registered in 2015. It is observed from Table 6 on page 26 that the number of registered customary marriages fluctuated between 2003 and 2007 after which there was a consistent decline from 2008 to 2014 then an increase in 2015 and 2016. The highest number of registered customary marriages was recorded in 2004 (20 301) whilst the lowest number was recorded in 2014 (3 062). The observed crude customary marriage rate was 0,1 per 1 000 estimated resident population in 2016².

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. During the period from 2012 to 2016, the proportion of marriages that were registered in the same year they took place, ranged from 15,1% in 2012; 24,0% in 2014 to 14,4% in 2016.

2.2.2 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.

2.2.3 Age at the time of customary marriage

The results presented in Table 7 on page 27 show that in 2016, the highest number of customary marriages were registered in KwaZulu-Natal [1 680 (42,2%)], followed by Limpopo [1 110 (27,9%)] and Eastern Cape [405 (10,2%)]. The lowest number of customary marriages was recorded in Western Cape [13 (0,3%)]. The age distribution of bridegrooms and brides at the time of customary marriage is presented in Table 8 on page 28. In 2016, there were 14 (0,4%) bridegrooms and 252 (6,3%) brides who were younger than 18 years.

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

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 2012 and 2016. The median ages for bridegrooms and brides remained fairly stable over the period 2012 to 2016. A further comparison of the ages of bridegrooms and brides (see Figure 7 on page 15) shows that in 2016, 85,7% of bridegrooms were older than their brides whilst 9,0% were younger than their brides, and 5,0% were of the same age as their brides.

2.3 Civil unions

2.3.1 Trends in the registration of civil unions (2012–2016)

Table 9 on page 31 show that in 2016, 1 331 civil unions were registered (including the registration of four civil unions of South African citizens and permanent residents living outside South Africa). In 2016, the crude civil union rate was 0,02 per 1 000 estimated resident population³. In general, the number of civil unions registered in South Africa increased over the five-year period. Civil unions registered increased by 12,3% from 1 185 in 2015 to 1 331 in 2016. The provincial distribution of civil unions registered in 2016 indicates that Gauteng (494) and Western Cape (358) were the provinces with the highest number of registrations of civil unions. In total, 64,0% of civil unions in 2016 were registered in these two provinces. The lowest number of registered civil unions was recorded in Limpopo (17) and Northern Cape (15).

2.3.2 Marital status at the time of civil union

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

2.3.3 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. It is observed that there were three spouses-2 that were teenagers aged 19 years.

As observed in Figure 8 on page 16, the median ages of spouses-1 remained at 36 years throughout the five-year period whilst the median ages of spouses-2 were fluctuating between 33 years and 34 years. Furthermore, the median ages of spouses-1 were higher than those of spouses-2. Over the five-year period, the yearly differences in the median ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 ranged between two and three years. Figure 9 on page 16 further shows that spouses-1 were generally older than spouses-2. In 2016, 61,7% of spouses-1 were older than their spouses, whilst 32,1% were younger than their spouses and 6,2% were of the same age as their spouses.

³ 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 (2003 – 2016)

The 2016 divorce data reported in this statistical release are based on 25 326 completed divorce forms that Stats SA received and processed by the end of December 2017. The observed crude divorce rate was 0,5 divorces per 1 000 estimated resident population in 2016⁴. The number (25 326) indicates an increase of 66 (0,3%) divorces from the 25 260 cases processed in 2015 (see Table 11 on page 35). The table shows that the total number of divorces generally fluctuated over the period 2003 to 2010 then increased from 2011 to 2016, with the highest number observed in 2005 (32 484) and the lowest in 2011 (20 980). In 2016, about 48 divorces were granted for same-sex couples of which 38 were female couples and 10 were male couples.

Table 11 also provides data on divorces classified by population group and the year in which the divorce was granted. In 2016, the population group of 1 311 couples was not specified. Couples from the white population group dominated the number of divorces from 2003 to 2007; thereafter, black African couples had the highest number of divorces up until 2016. In 2003, 40,0% of the divorcees were from the white population group whereas 24,3% came from the black African population group. By 2016, 42,0% of the divorcees were from the black African population group and 24,8% from the white population group. The proportions of the divorcees from the coloured and the Indian/Asian population groups were quite invariable during the thirteen-year period.

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 (29,3%) and wives (32,1%) did not specify the type of occupation they were engaged in at the time of divorce. In addition, 17,3% and 24,1% of husbands and wives respectively were not economically active at the time of divorce. Most male divorcees were managers and administrators 3 478 (13,7%) and 2 410 (9,5%) were employed in professional, semi-professional and technical occupations while female divorcees were largely in clerical and sales occupations 3 248 (12,8%) and professionals, semi-professionals and technical occupations 3 113 (12,3%).

3.2 Characteristics of plaintiffs

The 2016 data presented in Table 13 on page 37 show that more wives than husbands, 12 954 (51,1%) women compared to 8 651 (34,2%) men initiated divorce and 1 868 (7,4%) divorces were initiated by both husband and wife. The sex of the plaintiff was not specified in 1 853 (7,3%) cases. With the exception of women from the black African population who had a lower proportion of plaintiffs (44,4%), the proportion of women plaintiffs from the other population groups was above 50,0%. The proportion of women plaintiffs for the white population group, coloured population group and Indian/Asian population group were 58,1%, 56,7% and 55,7% respectively. Among black African divorcees, divorce initiated by both partners constituted about 10%.

Table 14 on page 37 provides information on the province and sex of the plaintiff. The provincial distribution indicates that Western Cape (6 224), Gauteng (5 816), KwaZulu-Natal (4 314) and Eastern Cape (3 352) were the provinces with the highest number of divorces granted. However this could also be due to the fact that these provinces have the highest populations. In total, 77,8% of divorces granted in 2016 were from these four provinces. Eastern Cape (14,1%) and Gauteng (9,8%) show higher proportions of both male and female divorcees as plaintiffs.

3.3 Number of divorces by way of solemnisation of marriage

Information presented in Table 15 on page 38 show that 11 794 (46,6%) of the 2016 divorce cases were from marriages that were solemnised by religious rites and 10 971 (43,3%) by civil rites. Over two-third (68,9%) of divorces from the white population group and 65,4% of divorces from the coloured population group were from

⁴ 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, 65,7% and 51,0% respectively.

3.4 Number of times married

Results presented in Table 16 on page 38 show that the 2016 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 11,9% of men and 10,3% 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 ages at the time of divorce in 2016 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 2016 by population group showed similar median age for black African and white males (45 years). The Indian/Asian population group recorded the lowest median ages in female divorcees at 39 years. 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.

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 18 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. The information reveal that 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 at divorce was 40 to 44 for all population groups (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 30 to 34 years (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 2016 as shown in Table 19 on page 41 for men and Table 20 on page 42 for women.

Table 19 on page 41 shows that the largest number [6 817 (26,9%)] of divorces among males were for marriages that lasted between five and nine years. This group is followed by marriages that lasted between ten and fourteen years [4 955 (19,6%)] and marriages that lasted for less than five years [4 436 (17,5%)]. Results showed that four in ten divorces (44,4%) of the 25 326 in 2016 were marriages that lasted for less than 10 years.

According to results given in Figure 13 on page 18, 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 31,7% of divorces from the black African; 25,4% from coloured; 25,0% from white and 22,4% from Indian/Asian population groups were marriages that lasted between five and nine years. The white population had the highest proportion (22,6%) 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.

3.7 Divorces involving couples with minor children

In 2016, 13 922 (55,0%) of the 25 326 divorces had children younger than 18 years (see Table 21 on page 43). Looking at the coloured divorcees, proportion of divorces involving couples with minor children constituted about 62,0%. The profile of white divorcees showed that more than half of the recorded divorces were without children (54,4%). Table 22 on page 43 shows that 45,5% of children affected by divorce were from the black African population group; 21,7% from the coloured population group; 20,0% from the white population group and 5,5% 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 2016, 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. 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.

In total, 139 512 civil marriages were registered in South Africa in 2016, most (57,9%) of which were solemnised by DHA marriage officers. The highest number of civil marriages was registered in Gauteng (36 413), followed by KwaZulu-Natal (21 440) and Western Cape (20 565), and the lowest was registered in Northern Cape (4 278). The majority of civil marriages in 2016 for both bridegrooms (113 738) and brides (120 501) were first time marriages, with women generally entering into marriage at younger ages than men.

The number of registered customary marriages was 3 978 in 2016, which increased by 14,7% from a total of 3 467 recorded in 2015. The majority (85,7%) of bridegrooms were older than their brides, with the gap in median ages at customary marriage much wider than other types of marriages. The number of registered civil unions in South Africa in 2016 was 1 331, most of which were registered in Gauteng (494) and Western Cape (358), and lowest in Limpopo (17) and Northern Cape (15).

With regard to divorces, the data showed that 25 326 divorces were granted in South Africa in 2016. Generally, there was an increase in the proportion of divorces for black Africans and decline for white population group from 2003 to 2016. Divorces were mainly from people who had married for the first time. There were more wives than husband plaintiffs, with husbands generally getting divorced at a later age than wives. The provincial distribution shows that Western Cape (6 224), Gauteng (5 816), KwaZulu-Natal (4 314) and Eastern Cape (3 352) were the provinces with the highest number of divorces granted. About 22 750 children aged less than 18 years were affected by divorces that took place in 2016.

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, 2012–2016

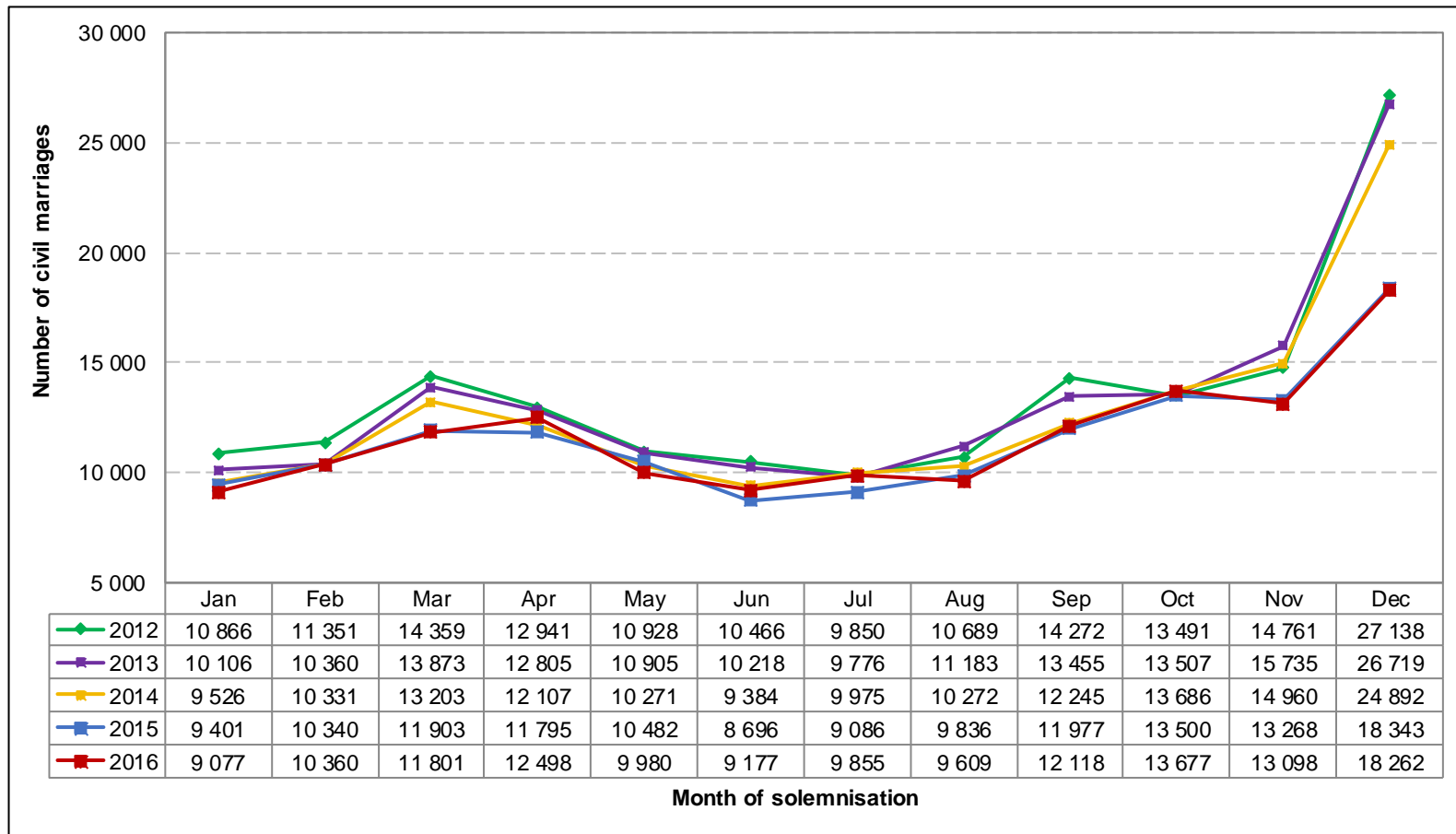
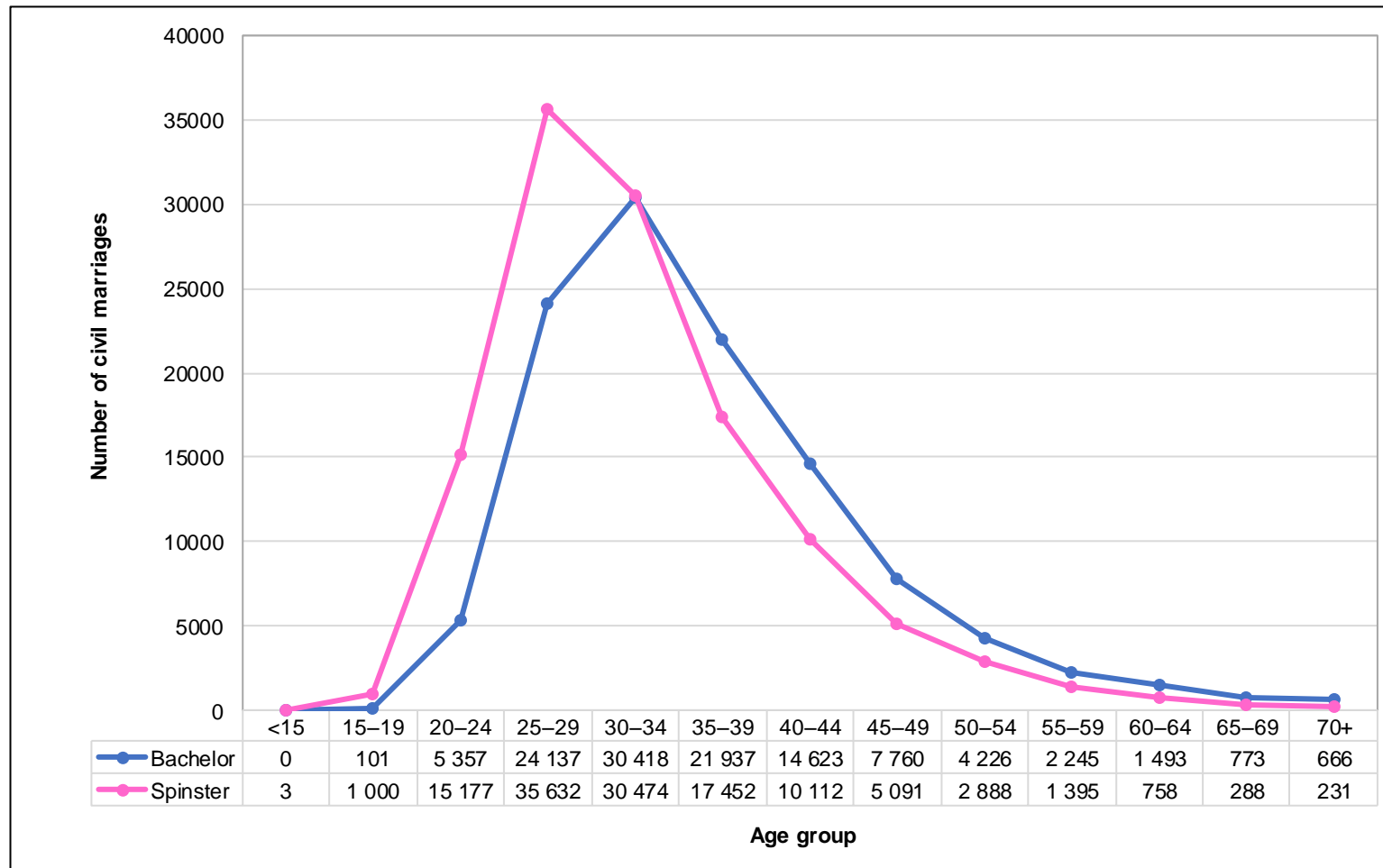


Figure 2 – Number of civil marriages for bachelors and spinsters by age group, 2016



Excluding two cases with unspecified bachelors age

Figure 3a – Median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of civil marriage, 2012–2016

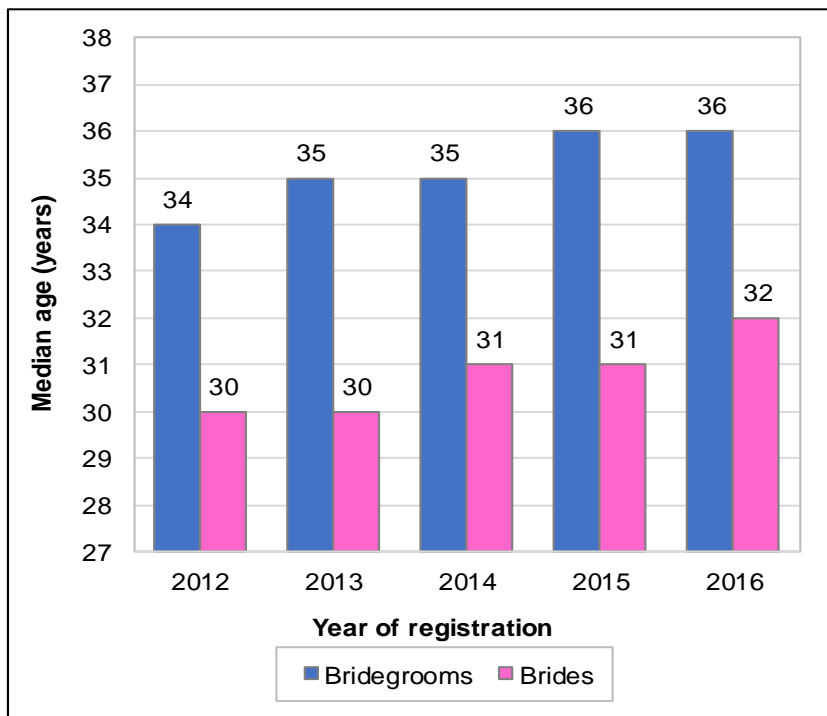


Figure 3b – Median ages of bachelors and spinsters at the time of civil marriage, 2012–2016

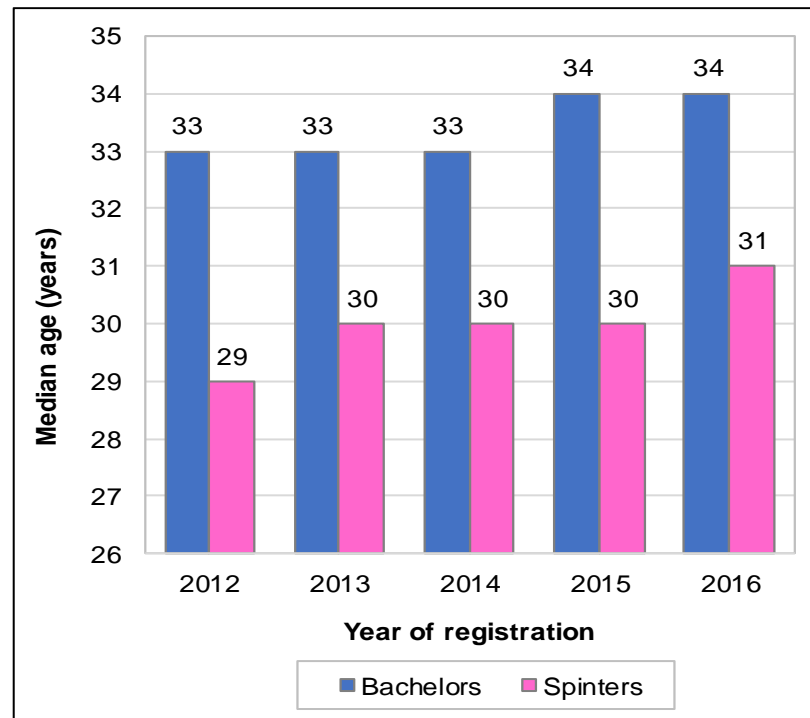


Figure 3c – Median ages of widowers and widows at the time of civil marriage, 2012–2016

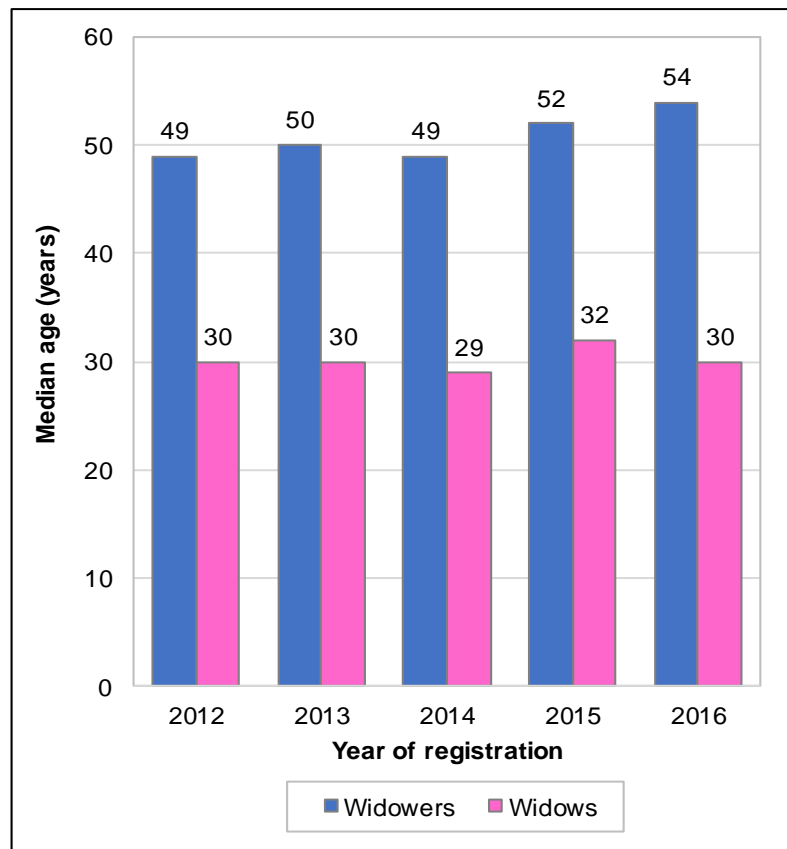


Figure 3d – Median ages of male and female divorcees at the time of civil marriage, 2012–2016

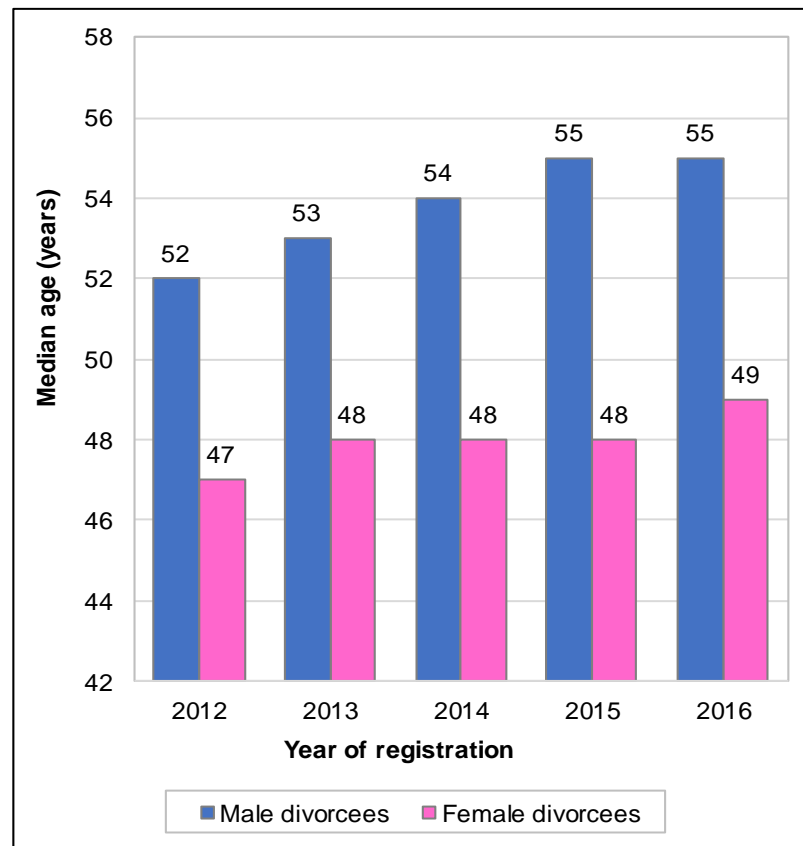
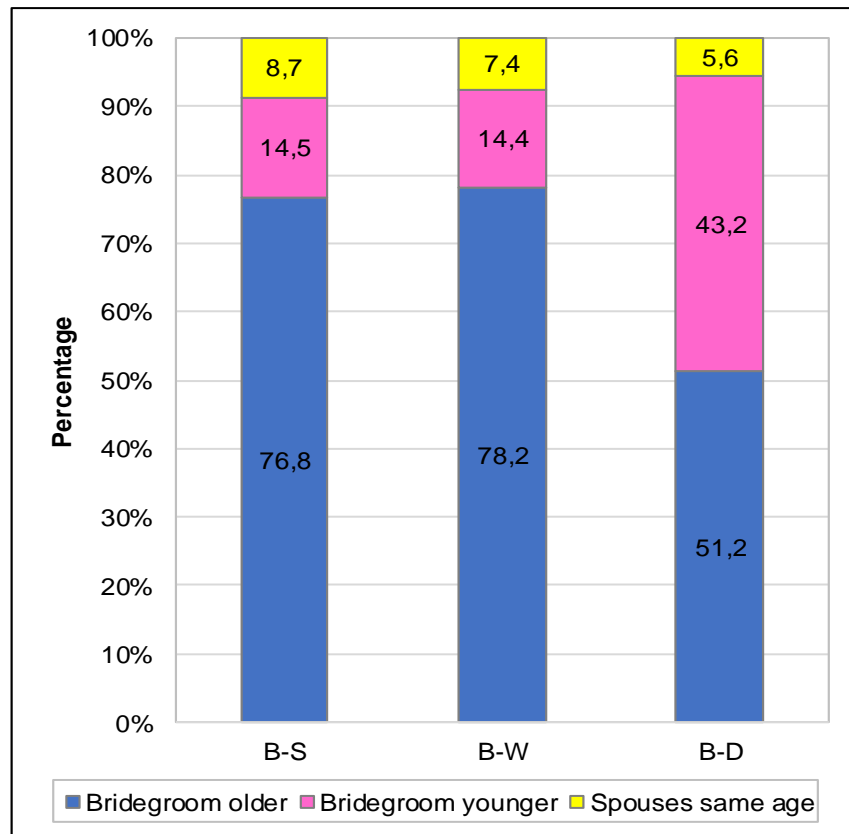


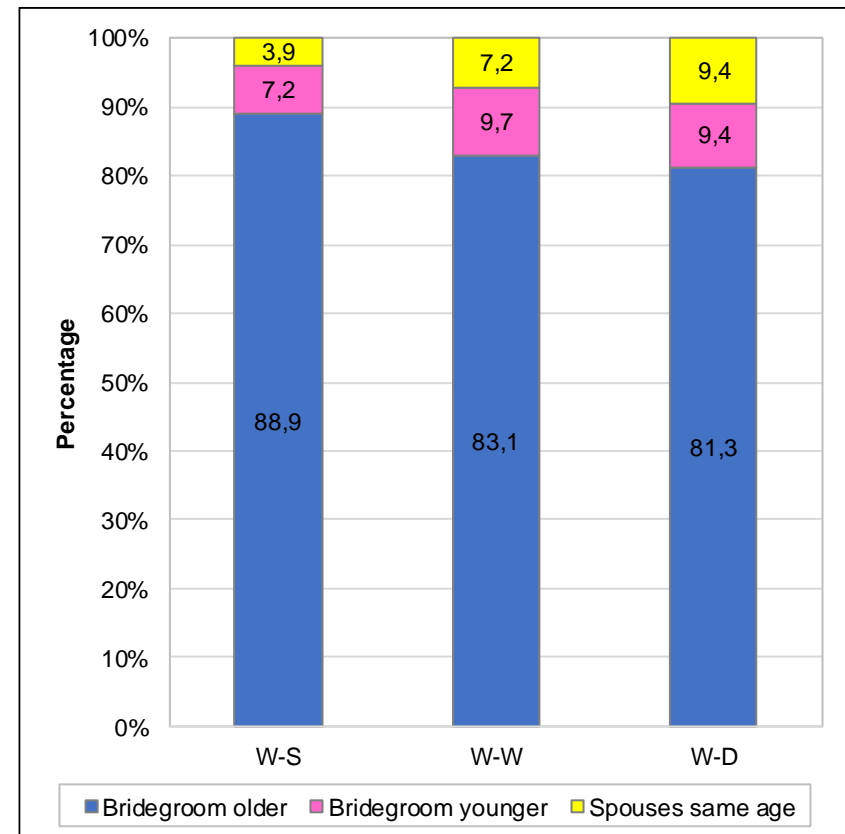
Figure 4a – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (bachelors), 2016



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

B – S = Bachelor to Spinster
 B – D = Bachelor to Divorcee
 B – W = Bachelor to Widow

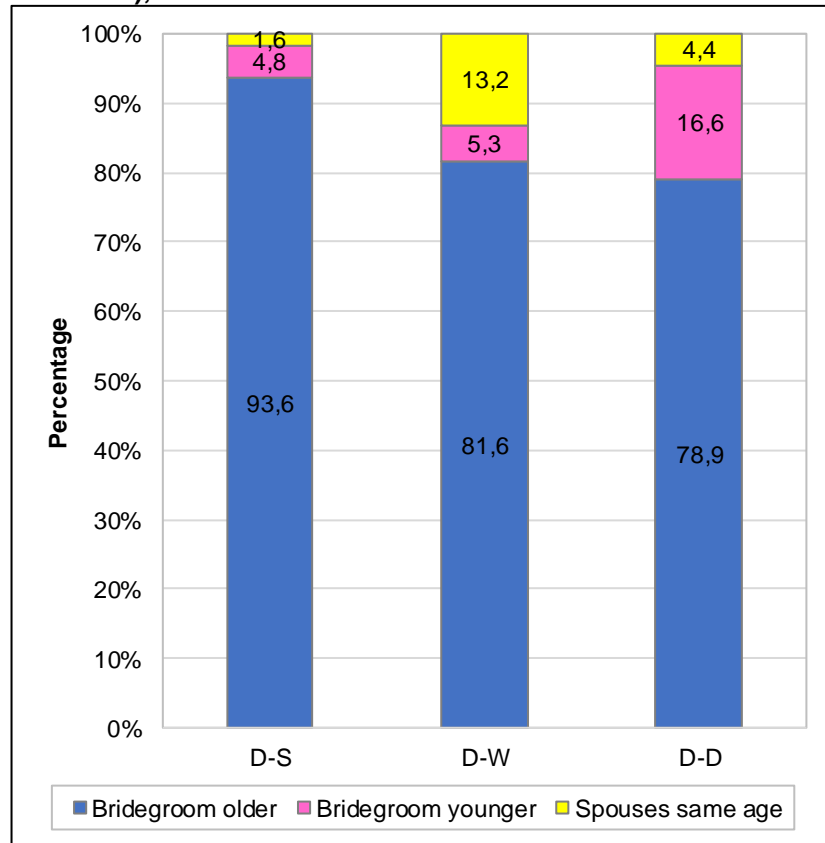
Figure 4b – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (widowers), 2016



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

W – S = Widower to Spinster
 W – D = Widower to Divorcee
 W – W = Widower to Widow

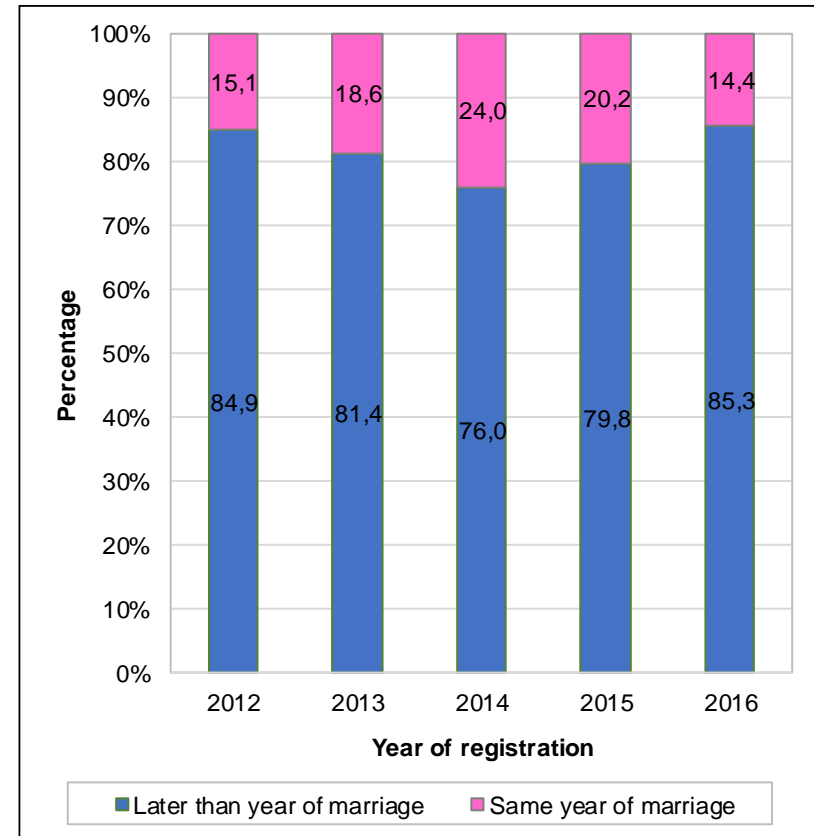
Figure 4c – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (male divorcees), 2016



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

D – S = Divorcee to Spinster
 D – D = Divorcee to Divorcee
 D – W = Divorcee to Widow

Figure 5 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by year of marriage and time it took to register the marriage, 2012–2016



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

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

Figure 6 – Median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of customary marriage, 2012–2016

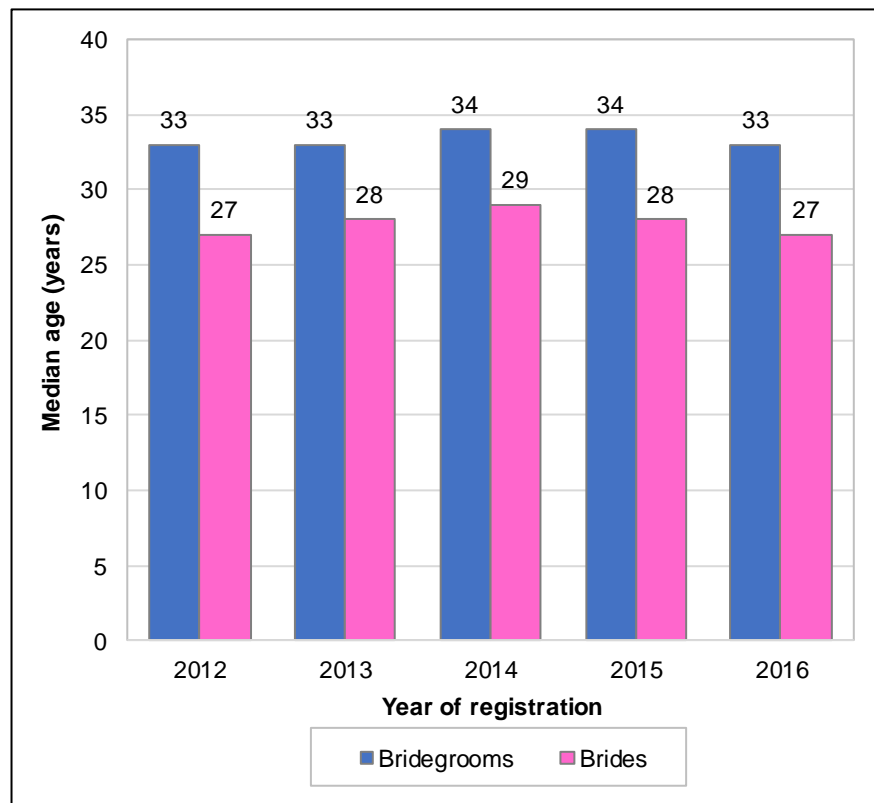
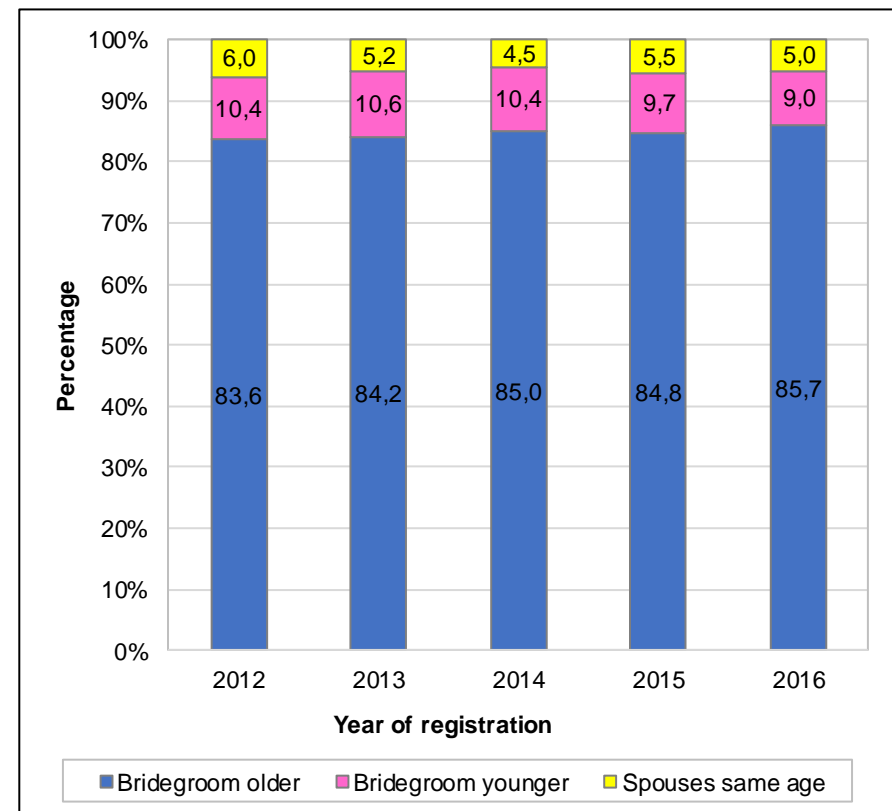


Figure 7 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage, 2012–2016



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

Figure 8 – Median ages of spouses in civil unions, 2012–2016

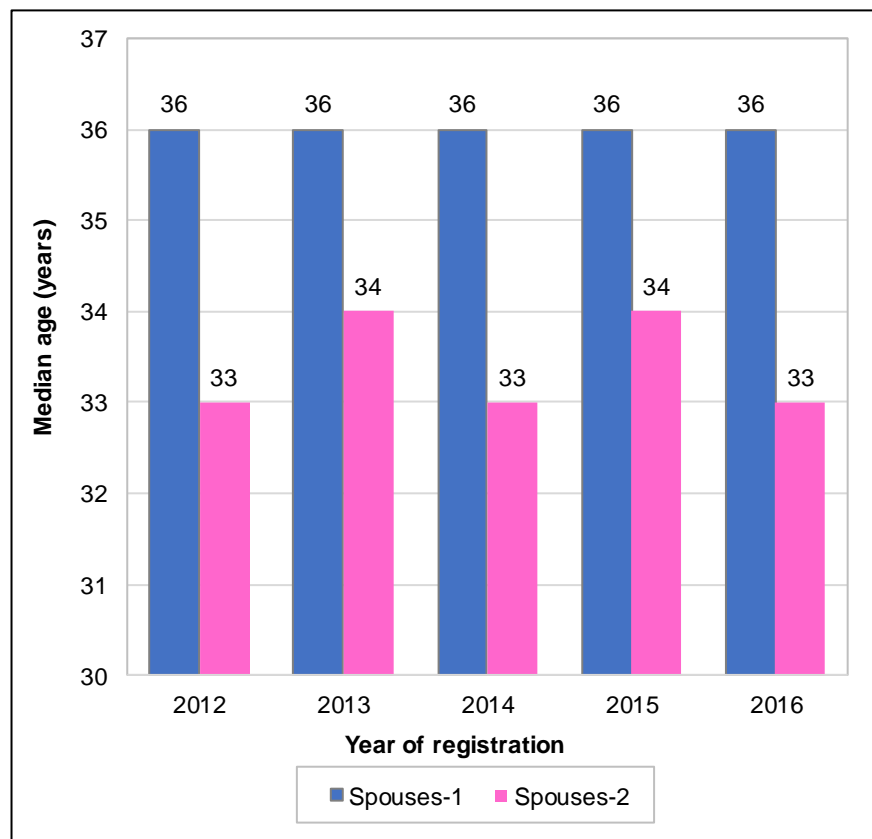
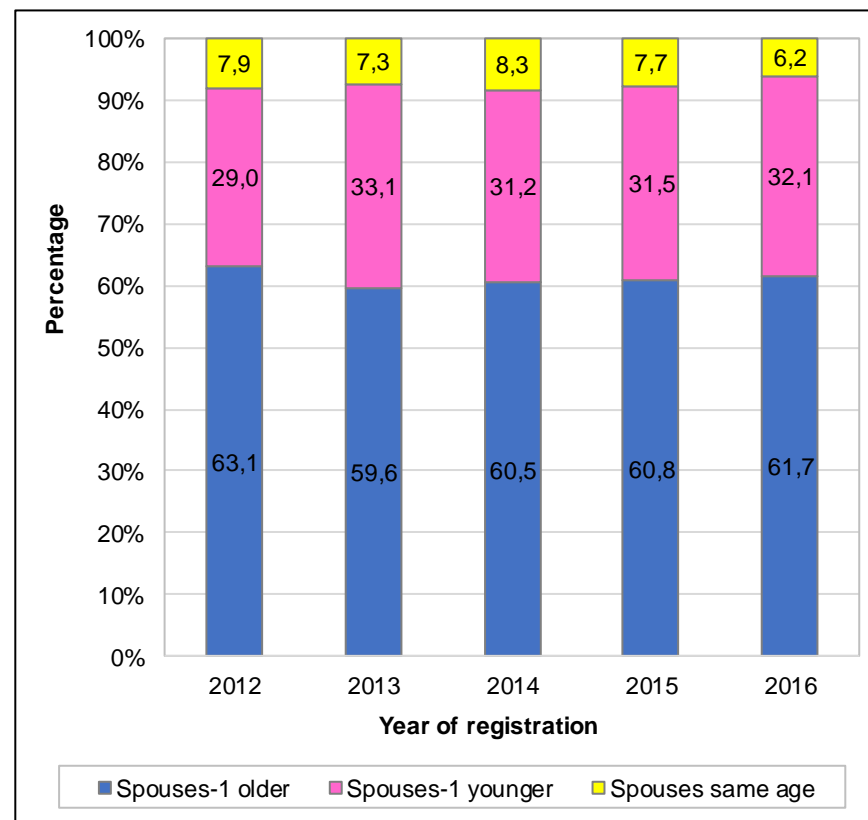


Figure 9 – Percentage distribution of civil unions by age differences between spouses at the time of union, 2012–2016



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

Figure 10 – Median ages of divorcees by sex and population group, 2016

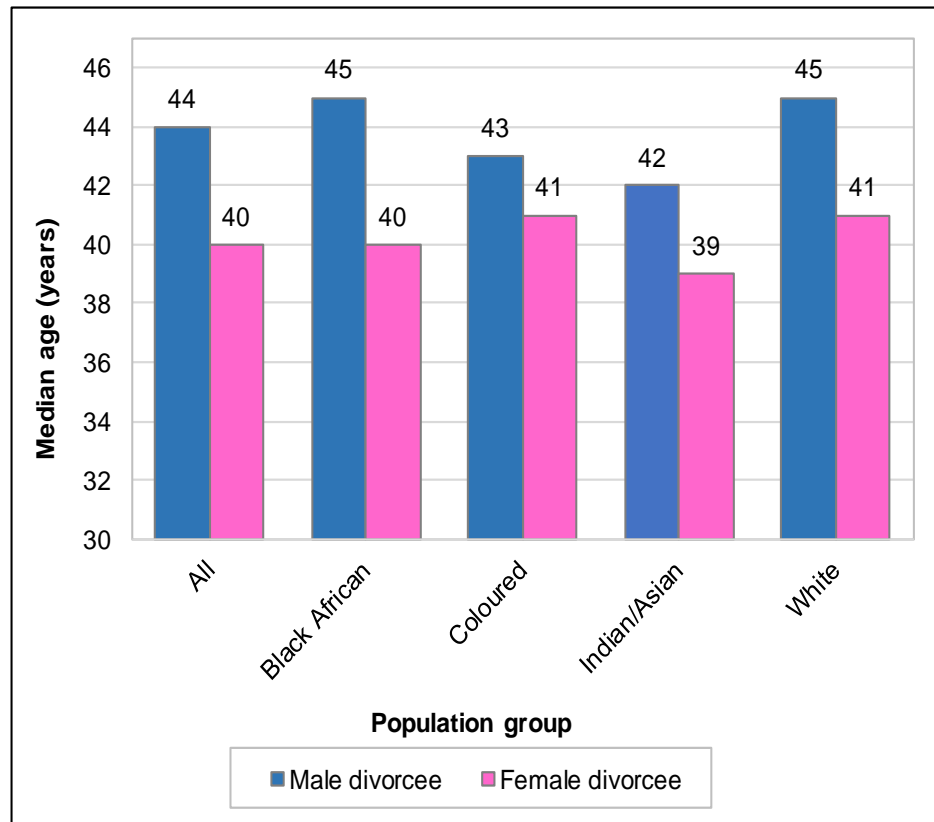


Figure 11 – The proportions of divorces by age and population group (males), 2016

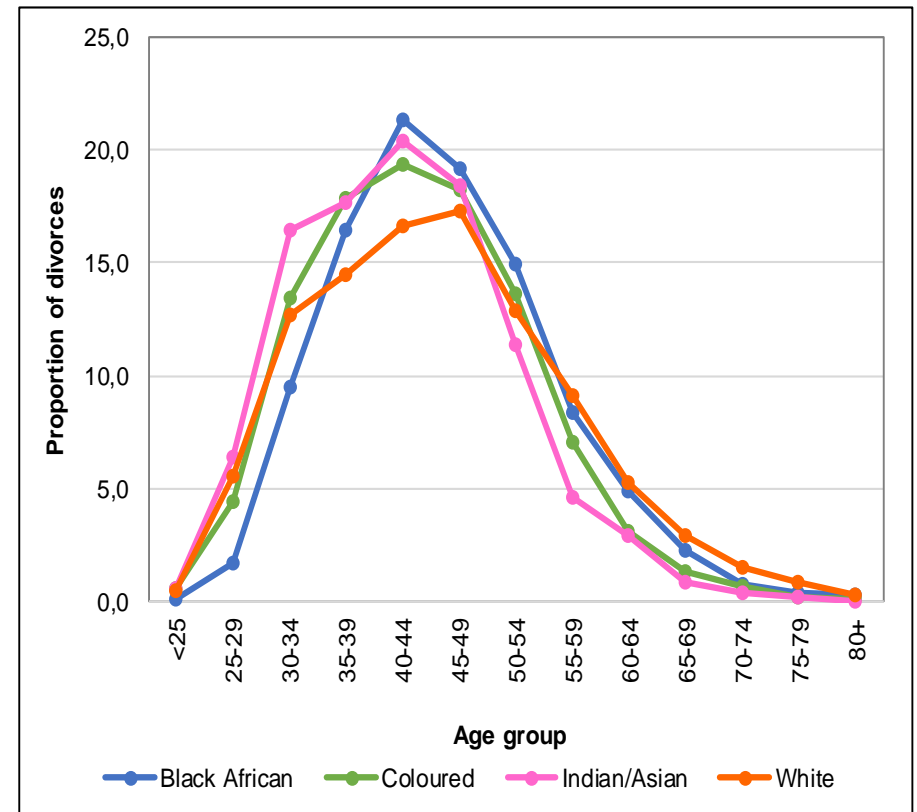


Figure 12 – The proportions of divorces by age group and population group (females), 2016

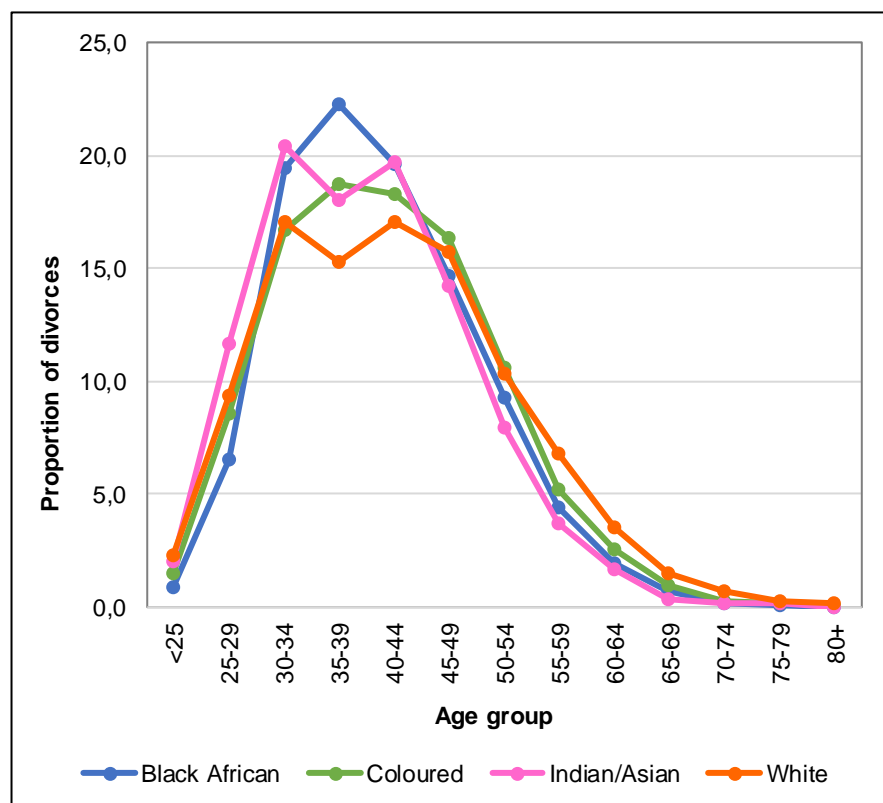


Figure 13 – The proportions of divorces by duration of marriage and population group, 2016

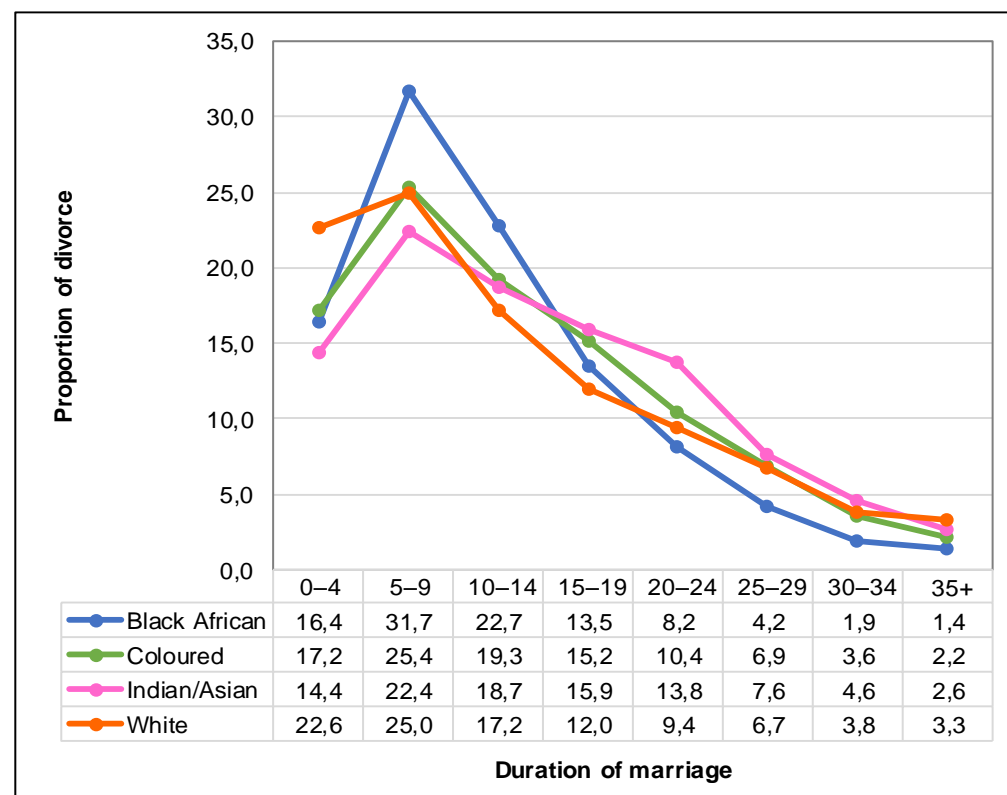


Table 1 – Number of registered civil marriages in South Africa, 2003 – 2016

Year of registration	Number of civil marriages
2003	178 689
2004	176 521
2005	180 657
2006	184 860
2007	183 030
2008	186 522
2009	171 989
2010	170 826
2011	167 264
2012	161 112
2013	158 642
2014	150 852
2015	138 627
2016	139 512

Table 2 – Number and percentage distribution of civil marriages by province of marriage registration and way of solemnisation, 2016

Province of registration	Way of solemnisation				%			
	Total	DHA	Religious	Unspecified	Total	DHA	Religious	Unspecified
Total	139 512	80 748	43 359	15 405	100,0	57,9	31,1	11,0
Western Cape	20 565	9 671	10 034	860	100,0	47,0	48,8	4,2
Eastern Cape	15 438	8 091	5 463	1 884	100,0	52,4	35,4	12,2
Northern Cape	4 278	1 986	1 084	1 208	100,0	46,4	25,3	28,2
Free State	9 219	7 146	1 900	173	100,0	77,5	20,6	1,9
KwaZulu-Natal	21 440	12 419	6 636	2 385	100,0	57,9	31,0	11,1
North West	9 699	7 775	1 772	152	100,0	80,2	18,3	1,6
Gauteng	36 413	21 363	10 419	4 631	100,0	58,7	28,6	12,7
Mpumalanga	7 663	3 285	2 013	2 365	100,0	42,9	26,3	30,9
Limpopo	9 409	6 933	979	1 497	100,0	73,7	10,4	15,9
Outside RSA	372	336	30	6	100,0	90,3	8,1	1,6
Unknown	118	68	43	7	100,0	57,6	36,4	5,9
Unspecified	4 898	1 675	2 986	237	100,0	34,2	61,0	4,8

Table 3 – Number of civil marriages by province of registration and marital status of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2016

Province of registration	Bridegroom					Bride				
	Total	Bachelor	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	139 512	113 738	5 151	1 343	19 280	139 512	120 501	3 337	1 044	14 630
Western Cape	20 565	16 152	762	23	3 628	20 565	17 025	616	23	2 901
Eastern Cape	15 438	12 786	634	128	1 890	15 438	13 759	371	83	1 225
Northern Cape	4 278	3 529	192	23	534	4 278	3 738	155	24	361
Free State	9 219	7 589	394	91	1 145	9 219	7 983	248	135	853
KwaZulu-Natal	21 440	18 008	763	304	2 365	21 440	19 158	378	184	1 720
North West	9 699	8 069	397	49	1 184	9 699	8 508	246	54	891
Gauteng	36 413	28 905	1 187	380	5 941	36 413	30 465	864	315	4 769
Mpumalanga	7 663	6 314	311	131	907	7 663	6 704	166	96	697
Limpopo	9 409	8 091	316	182	820	9 409	8 689	148	99	473
Outside RSA	372	304	15	-	53	372	312	6	-	54
Unknown	118	93	6	4	15	118	95	6	4	13
Unspecified	4 898	3 898	174	28	798	4 898	4 065	133	27	673

Table 4 – Number of civil marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage and marital status of husband, 2016

Age difference	Grand total	Bachelor to					Divorcee to				
		Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	139 512	113 738	106 854	1 140	769	4 975	5 151	3 009	902	38	1 202
Bridegroom Older	106 635	85 513	82 063	584	601	2 265	4 543	2 817	712	31	983
Bridegroom Younger	21 919	18 406	15 499	492	111	2 304	467	145	150	2	170
Same Age	10 956	9 817	9 290	64	57	406	141	47	40	5	49
Unspecified	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Age difference	Widower to					Unspecified to				
	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	1 343	1 075	32	195	41	19 280	9 563	1 263	42	8 412
Bridegroom Older	1 183	956	26	162	39	15 396	8 500	839	36	6 021
Bridegroom Younger	101	77	3	19	2	2 945	748	362	4	1 831
Same Age	59	42	3	14	-	939	315	62	2	560
Unspecified	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2016

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Bachelor	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	139 512	113 738	5 151	1 343	19 280	139 512	120 501	3 337	1 044	14 630
<18	4	3	-	-	1	99	94	2	2	1
18	20	20	-	-	-	266	253	-	11	2
19	81	78	1	2	-	685	656	3	25	1
18-19	101	98	1	2	-	951	909	3	36	3
20	184	184	-	-	-	1 168	1 132	3	31	2
21	444	441	-	2	1	1 943	1 889	6	42	6
22	844	833	-	9	2	2 821	2 759	7	44	11
23	1 583	1 559	1	21	2	4 154	4 087	2	48	17
24	2 375	2 340	2	28	5	5 401	5 310	4	54	33
20-24	5 430	5 357	3	60	10	15 487	15 177	22	219	69
25	3 497	3 447	4	26	20	6 724	6 585	8	62	69
26	4 383	4 304	3	50	26	7 499	7 301	7	60	131
27	5 148	5 068	4	31	45	7 749	7 532	16	46	155
28	5 694	5 575	6	31	82	7 471	7 208	13	48	202
29	5 904	5 743	5	35	121	7 332	7 006	20	33	273
25-29	24 626	24 137	22	173	294	36 775	35 632	64	249	830
30	6 304	6 113	9	32	150	7 389	7 023	38	27	301
31	6 683	6 395	22	25	241	7 147	6 700	30	25	392
32	6 447	6 107	22	28	290	6 638	6 156	35	17	430
33	6 338	5 950	19	21	348	6 032	5 481	49	16	486
34	6 332	5 853	28	13	438	5 715	5 114	41	11	549
30-34	32 104	30 418	100	119	1 467	32 921	30 474	193	96	2 158

Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2016 (continued)

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Bachelor	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
35	5 583	5 107	29	10	437	4 959	4 376	42	11	530
36	5 266	4 736	41	10	479	4 497	3 953	68	10	466
37	4 932	4 370	52	10	500	4 083	3 475	66	8	534
38	4 507	3 864	58	7	578	3 489	2 857	65	11	556
39	4 571	3 860	64	8	639	3 428	2 791	85	5	547
35-39	24 859	21 937	244	45	2 633	20 456	17 452	326	45	2 633
40	4 215	3 493	76	5	641	3 135	2 477	91	1	566
41	3 994	3 141	102	3	748	2 879	2 248	87	-	544
42	3 869	3 017	92	5	755	2 763	2 014	121	4	624
43	3 379	2 487	104	3	785	2 356	1 695	98	1	562
44	3 371	2 485	117	3	766	2 413	1 678	124	3	608
40-44	18 828	14 623	491	19	3 695	13 546	10 112	521	9	2 904
45	2 689	1 819	140	2	728	1 852	1 187	107	-	558
46	2 920	1 963	140	4	813	1 935	1 236	129	4	566
47	2 453	1 495	148	11	799	1 590	966	100	2	522
48	2 317	1 412	134	17	754	1 607	972	137	6	492
49	1 956	1 071	161	30	694	1 271	730	108	9	424
45-49	12 335	7 760	723	64	3 788	8 255	5 091	581	21	2 562
50	1 989	1 030	187	34	738	1 301	706	122	10	463
51	1 821	945	147	36	693	1 134	676	100	12	346
52	1 726	807	177	48	694	1 054	550	113	18	373
53	1 588	775	193	63	557	988	533	102	31	322
54	1 461	669	174	65	553	838	423	110	23	282
50-54	8 585	4 226	878	246	3 235	5 315	2 888	547	94	1 786

Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2016 (concluded)

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Bachelor	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Spinster	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
55	1 236	535	157	56	488	659	319	85	17	238
56	1 252	550	163	44	495	682	338	79	29	236
57	983	367	171	46	399	554	280	71	24	179
58	1 077	452	151	60	414	517	243	74	34	166
59	876	341	133	47	355	421	215	63	25	118
55-59	5 424	2 245	775	253	2 151	2 833	1 395	372	129	937
60	890	379	142	51	318	469	247	66	20	136
61	720	293	135	50	242	346	147	76	25	98
62	661	281	133	35	212	262	113	50	17	82
63	612	273	140	29	170	272	132	56	12	72
64	597	267	129	35	166	244	119	40	14	71
60-64	3 480	1 493	679	200	1 108	1 593	758	288	88	459
65	494	204	113	27	150	180	75	48	8	49
66	485	198	131	24	132	166	74	38	8	46
67	386	143	106	24	113	168	56	60	11	41
68	313	120	87	13	93	126	47	35	10	34
69	280	108	89	7	76	98	36	33	4	25
65-69	1 958	773	526	95	564	738	288	214	41	195
70+	1 776	666	709	67	334	543	231	204	15	93
Unspecified	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 6 – Number of registered customary marriages in South Africa, 2003–2016

Year of registration	Number of marriages
2003	17 283
2004	20 301
2005	19 252
2006	14 039
2007	20 259
2008	16 003
2009	13 506
2010	9 996
2011	5 084
2012	4 555
2013	3 498
2014	3 062
2015	3 467
2016	3 978

Table 7 – Number and percentage distribution of customary marriages by province of marriage registration and age difference, 2016

Province of registration	Total	Bridegroom Older	Bridegroom Younger	Same Age	Unspecified	Total	Bridegroom Older	Bridegroom Younger	Same Age	Unspecified
Total	3 978	3 411	357	198	12	100,0	85,7	9,0	5,0	0,3
Western Cape	13	11	2	-	-	100,0	84,6	15,4	-	-
Eastern Cape	405	354	26	22	3	100,0	87,4	6,4	5,4	0,7
Northern Cape	22	19	1	2	-	100,0	86,4	4,5	9,1	-
Free State	39	35	2	2	-	100,0	89,7	5,1	5,1	-
KwaZulu-Natal	1 680	1 403	177	97	3	100,0	83,5	10,5	5,8	0,2
North West	52	50	2	-	-	100,0	96,2	3,8	-	-
Gauteng	224	191	24	9	-	100,0	85,3	10,7	4,0	-
Mpumalanga	318	258	34	24	2	100,0	81,1	10,7	7,5	0,6
Limpopo	1 110	996	76	35	3	100,0	89,7	6,8	3,2	0,3
Outside RSA	19	15	3	1	-	100,0	78,9	15,8	5,3	-
Unknown	92	75	10	6	1	100,0	81,5	10,9	6,5	1,1
Unspecified	4	4	-	-	-	100,0	100,0	-	-	-

Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2016

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
Total	3 978	3 978
<18	14	252
18	23	165
19	36	187
18-19	59	352
20	57	169
21	96	187
22	120	192
23	141	169
24	163	177
20-24	577	894
25	145	190
26	152	180
27	161	168
28	156	177
29	165	158
25-29	779	873
30	135	144
31	153	116
32	160	130
33	147	100
34	146	118
30-34	741	608

Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2016 (continued)

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
35	129	94
36	133	85
37	96	77
38	104	81
39	124	71
35-39	586	408
40	102	58
41	79	48
42	85	66
43	82	40
44	69	41
40-44	417	253
45	65	41
46	59	35
47	61	32
48	57	24
49	50	27
45-49	292	159
50	53	16
51	52	20
52	42	13
53	31	21
54	32	19
50-54	210	89

Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2016 (concluded)

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
55	28	11
56	26	11
57	23	8
58	23	6
59	22	6
55-59	122	42
60	23	10
61	21	6
62	15	3
63	12	1
64	14	3
60-64	85	23
65	14	4
66	9	1
67	11	-
68	8	1
69	4	2
65-69	46	8
70+	38	5
Unspecified	12	12

Table 9 – Number and percentage distribution of civil unions registered by province of registration, 2012–2016

Province of registration	Number					%				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Grand Total	987	993	1 144	1 185	1 331	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Western Cape	253	320	314	346	358	25,6	32,2	27,5	29,2	26,9
Eastern Cape	38	37	54	49	57	3,9	3,7	4,7	4,1	4,3
Northern Cape	106	87	81	10	15	10,7	8,8	7,1	0,8	1,1
Free State	27	21	32	41	36	2,7	2,1	2,8	3,5	2,7
KwaZulu-Natal	91	81	161	220	249	9,2	8,2	14,1	18,6	18,7
North West	11	10	28	25	29	1,1	1,0	2,5	2,1	2,2
Gauteng	425	411	452	443	494	43,1	41,4	39,5	37,4	37,1
Mpumalanga	12	16	9	24	22	1,2	1,6	0,8	2,0	1,7
Limpopo	13	6	10	16	17	1,3	0,6	0,9	1,4	1,3
Outside South Africa	11	4	3	4	4	1,1	0,4	0,3	0,3	0,3
Unspecified	-	-	-	7	50	-	-	-	0,6	3,8

Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2016

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
Total	1 331	1 331
18	-	-
19	-	3
18-19	-	3
20	4	5
21	6	7
22	12	22
23	13	34
24	24	50
20-24	59	118
25	37	63
26	43	53
27	37	58
28	58	69
29	70	62
25-29	245	305
30	61	72
31	68	76
32	64	46
33	53	74
34	59	51
30-34	305	319

Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2016 (continued)

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
35	47	36
36	40	49
37	43	29
38	39	29
39	44	29
35-39	213	172
40	39	32
41	41	33
42	25	22
43	25	22
44	31	26
40-44	161	135
45	30	22
46	31	22
47	24	28
48	21	26
49	29	14
45-49	135	112
50	34	24
51	17	12
52	18	16
53	15	19
54	15	11
50-54	99	82

Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2016 (concluded)

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
55	8	9
56	19	13
57	11	6
58	12	11
59	5	8
55-59	55	47
60	5	6
61	4	4
62	8	9
63	4	6
64	9	1
60-64	30	26
65	4	-
66	2	2
67	2	4
68	1	-
69	3	1
65-69	12	7
70+	17	5

Table 11 – Number and percentage distribution of published divorces in South Africa by population group, 2003 – 2016

Year	Total	Numbers						%						
		Black African	Coloured	India/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified	Total	Black African	Coloured	India/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified
2003	31 566	7 657	3 911	1 508	12 639	532	5 319	100,0	24,3	12,4	4,8	40,0	1,7	16,9
2004	31 768	8 965	3 300	1 648	12 437	594	4 824	100,0	28,2	10,4	5,2	39,1	1,9	15,2
2005	32 484	8 672	3 568	1 635	11 582	538	6 489	100,0	26,7	11,0	5,0	35,7	1,7	20,0
2006	31 270	9 113	3 451	1 676	11 079	613	5 338	100,0	29,1	11,0	5,4	35,4	2,0	17,1
2007	29 639	9 055	3 558	1 715	9 935	865	4 511	100,0	30,6	12,0	5,8	33,5	2,9	15,2
2008	28 924	10 110	3 057	1 802	9 481	902	3 572	100,0	35,0	10,6	6,2	32,8	3,1	12,3
2009	30 763	10 528	4 016	1 610	9 981	2 912	1 716	100,0	34,2	13,1	5,2	32,4	9,5	5,6
2010	22 936	8 169	3 189	1 294	6 995	31	3 258	100,0	35,6	13,9	5,6	30,5	0,1	14,2
2011	20 980	7 517	3 473	1 359	6 730	-	1 901	100,0	35,8	16,6	6,5	32,1	-	9,1
2012	21 998	7 311	3 967	1 036	7 238	22	2 424	100,0	33,2	18,0	4,7	32,9	0,1	11
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

Table 12 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by type of occupation at the time of divorce, 2016

Occupation	Number		%	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Total	25 326	25 326	100,0	100,0
Professional, semi-professionals and technical occupations	2 410	3 113	9,5	12,3
Managers and administrators	3 478	1 931	13,7	7,6
Clerical and sales occupations	1 607	3 248	6,3	12,8
Transport delivery and communications	902	63	3,6	0,2
Services occupations	2 281	2 043	9,0	8,1
Farming and related occupations	114	20	0,5	0,1
Artisans apprentice and related occupations	1 720	257	6,8	1,0
Production foreman mine and quarry worker	1 008	415	4,0	1,6
Not economically active	4 378	6 103	17,3	24,1
Unspecified	7 428	8 133	29,3	32,1

Table 13 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and plaintiff, 2016

Population group	Number					%				
	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified
Grand Total	25 326	8 651	12 954	1 868	1 853	100,0	34,2	51,1	7,4	7,3
Black African	10 641	4 031	4 726	1 099	785	100,0	37,9	44,4	10,3	7,4
Coloured	4 711	1 396	2 672	305	338	100,0	29,6	56,7	6,5	7,2
Indian/Asian	1 529	512	852	82	83	100,0	33,5	55,7	5,4	5,4
White	6 293	2 022	3 659	288	324	100,0	32,1	58,1	4,6	5,1
Mixed	841	249	460	70	62	100,0	29,6	54,7	8,3	7,4
Unspecified	1 311	441	585	24	261	100,0	33,6	44,6	1,8	19,9

Table 14 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by province of divorce registration and plaintiff, 2016

Province of divorce registration	Number					%				
	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified
Grand Total	25 326	8 651	12 954	1 868	1 853	100,0	34,2	51,1	7,4	7,3
Western Cape	6 224	2 003	3 422	352	447	100,0	32,2	55,0	5,7	7,2
Eastern Cape	3 352	1 114	1 595	472	171	100,0	33,2	47,6	14,1	5,1
Northern Cape	638	213	344	8	73	100,0	33,4	53,9	1,3	11,4
Free State	2 361	954	1 232	26	149	100,0	40,4	52,2	1,1	6,3
KwaZulu-Natal	4 314	1 539	2 146	269	360	100,0	35,7	49,7	6,2	8,3
North West	558	228	272	27	31	100,0	40,9	48,7	4,8	5,6
Gauteng	5 816	1 831	2 915	568	502	100,0	31,5	50,1	9,8	8,6
Mpumalanga	1 035	363	531	81	60	100,0	35,1	51,3	7,8	5,8
Limpopo	1 028	406	497	65	60	100,0	39,5	48,3	6,3	5,8

Table 15 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and way of solemnisation of the marriage, 2016

Population group	Number				%			
	Total	Religious	DHA	Unspecified	Total	Religious	DHA	Unspecified
Total	25 326	11 794	10 971	2 561	100,0	46,6	43,3	10,1
Black African	10 641	3 080	6 990	571	100,0	28,9	65,7	5,4
Coloured	4 711	3 081	1 255	375	100,0	65,4	26,6	8,0
Indian/Asian	1 529	525	780	224	100,0	34,3	51,0	14,7
White	6 293	4 339	1 124	830	100,0	68,9	17,9	13,2
Mixed	841	301	462	78	100,0	35,8	54,9	9,3
Unspecified	1 311	468	360	483	100,0	35,7	27,5	36,8

Table 16 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by number of times married at the time of divorce, 2016

Number of times married	Number		%	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Total	25 326	25 326	100,0	100,0
Once	20 871	21 175	82,4	83,6
Twice	3 018	2 611	11,9	10,3
Three or more	437	352	1,7	1,4
Unspecified	1 000	1 188	3,9	4,7

Table 17 – Number of divorces by age and population group (male divorcees), 2016

Age group	Population group						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other	Unspecified
Grand Total	25 326	10 980	4 949	1 728	6 477	95	1 097
<25	76	8	27	9	31	-	1
25-29	878	175	216	103	349	1	34
30-34	2 837	998	653	266	799	8	113
35-39	3 939	1 734	868	287	909	13	128
40-44	4 775	2 246	942	331	1 044	15	197
45-49	4 503	2 024	887	298	1 087	14	193
50-54	3 387	1 576	661	184	811	5	150
55-59	1 970	886	343	74	570	1	96
60-64	1 084	519	151	47	331	2	34
65-69	524	238	63	13	183	-	27
70-74	221	78	32	6	96	-	9
75-79	107	37	10	3	53	-	4
80+	52	26	5	-	18	-	3
Unspecified	973	435	91	107	196	36	108

Table 18 – Number of divorces by age group and population group (female divorcees), 2016

Age group	Population						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other	Unspecified
Total	25 326	10 944	5 094	1 648	6 418	20	1 202
<25	355	95	75	32	141	-	12
25-29	1 967	688	425	185	583	-	86
30-34	4 431	2 055	829	323	1 061	3	160
35-39	4 724	2 353	931	285	951	3	201
40-44	4 546	2 074	911	312	1 057	1	191
45-49	3 742	1 555	814	226	975	2	170
50-54	2 404	986	528	126	643	1	120
55-59	1 289	468	260	59	421	-	81
60-64	604	205	126	26	220	1	26
65-69	235	74	47	6	94	-	14
70-74	87	21	13	2	43	-	8
75-79	31	9	6	2	14	-	-
80+	13	1	3	-	8	-	1
Unspecified	898	360	126	64	207	9	132

Table 19 – Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (male divorcees), 2016

Age group of husband	Duration of marriage									
	Total	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35+	Unspecified
Total	25 326	4 436	6 817	4 955	3 283	2 276	1 352	725	515	967
<25	76	68	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
25-29	878	614	227	4	-	-	3	1	-	29
30-34	2 837	1 104	1 396	241	8	-	-	3	2	83
35-39	3 939	823	1 706	1 066	196	7	-	6		135
40-44	4 775	607	1 387	1 455	901	233	11	1	10	170
45-49	4 503	413	808	1 002	991	861	238	12	10	168
50-54	3 387	308	475	486	595	637	541	187	10	148
55-59	1 970	154	236	260	245	278	336	309	98	54
60-64	1 084	84	131	136	137	110	123	122	190	51
65-69	524	45	74	74	66	67	36	41	93	28
70-74	221	20	38	22	31	16	17	16	52	9
75-79	107	15	18	15	8	9	9	5	23	5
80+	52	9	8	10	8	7	2	2	3	3
Unspecified	973	172	307	184	97	51	36	20	24	82

Table 20 – Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (female divorcees), 2016

Age group of wife	Duration of marriage									
	Total	0–4	5–9	10–14	15–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35+	Unspecified
Total	25 326	4 436	6 817	4 955	3 283	2 276	1 352	725	515	967
<25	355	298	44	2	-	-	-	-	-	11
25-29	1 967	1 022	831	39	-	-	3	1	1	70
30-34	4 431	1 177	2 199	849	51	-	-	12		143
35-39	4 724	706	1 629	1 576	604	49	2	1	7	150
40-44	4 546	433	887	1 198	1 190	603	48	-	15	172
45-49	3 742	324	490	604	758	910	457	49	7	143
50-54	2 404	169	270	275	338	422	508	317	28	77
55-59	1 289	87	144	138	133	142	203	225	162	55
60-64	604	44	53	64	74	62	58	68	151	30
65-69	235	21	23	24	19	16	24	20	79	9
70-74	87	7	12	10	7	8	5	7	28	3
75-79	31	5	3	3	2	1	2	-	13	2
80+	13	-	-	4	2	-	1	1	3	2
Unspecified	898	143	232	169	105	63	41	24	21	100

Table 21 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and divorces with and without children (aged below 18 years), 2016

Population group	Total	Divorces with children	Divorces without children	Total	Divorces with children	Divorces without children
Total	25 326	13 922	11 404	100,0	55,0	45,0
Black African	10 641	6 290	4 351	100,0	59,1	40,9
Coloured	4 711	2 919	1 792	100,0	62,0	38,0
Indian/Asian	1 529	807	722	100,0	52,8	47,2
White	6 293	2 869	3 424	100,0	45,6	54,4
Mixed	841	401	440	100,0	47,7	52,3
Unspecified	1 311	636	675	100,0	48,5	51,5

Table 22 – Number and percentage distribution of population group by children (aged below 18 years) affected by divorces, 2016

Population group	Total number of children involved	%
Total	22 750	100,0
Black African	10 345	45,5
Coloured	4 933	21,7
Indian/Asian	1 254	5,5
White	4 561	20,0
Mixed	656	2,9
Unspecified	1 001	4,4

EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. Purpose of the statistical release

The purpose of the statistical release is to provide information on marriages, unions and divorces recorded in South Africa in 2016. 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, 2017.

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

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 2016 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 2016, 27 439 divorces were granted by DOJ&CD from 85 regional courts. Out of these 27 439 divorce cases, Stats SA received and processed 25 326 Divorce forms.

4. Limitations

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

5. Definitions of terms

Bachelor: man who have never being married.

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 exist 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 do 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.

Spinster: woman who have never being married.

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.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Marriages and divorces, 2016

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

© Statistics South Africa, 2018

Users may apply or process this data, provided Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) is acknowledged as the original source of the data; that it is specified that the application and/or analysis is the result of the user's independent processing of the data; and that neither the basic data nor any reprocessed version or application thereof may be sold or offered for sale in any form whatsoever without prior permission from Stats SA.

Stats SA publishes approximately 300 different statistical releases each year. It is not economically viable to produce them in more than one of South Africa's eleven official languages. Since the releases are used extensively, not only locally but also by international economic and social-scientific communities, Stats SA releases are published in English only.

This publication is available on the Internet at www.statssa.gov.za

Stats SA products

A complete set of Stats SA publications is available at the Stats SA Library and the following libraries:

National Library of South Africa, Pretoria Division
National Library of South Africa, Cape Town Division
Natal Society Library, Pietermaritzburg
Library of Parliament, Cape Town
Bloemfontein Public Library
Johannesburg Public Library
Eastern Cape Library Services, King William's Town
Central Regional Library, Polokwane
Central Reference Library, Mbombela
Central Reference Collection, Kimberley
Central Reference Library, Mmabatho

Stats SA also provides a subscription service.

Enquiries:

Telephone: (012) 310 8600 (user information services)
(012) 406 3301 (technical enquiries)
(012) 310 8251 (orders)

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

Postal address: Private Bag X44, Pretoria, 0001

Produced by Stats SA