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The South Africa I know, the home I understand



PREFACE

This statistical release presents information on civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions that were registered in 2018 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 2018 by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DOJ&CD). It focuses on trends in divorces; demographic and occupational characteristics of the plaintiffs; age at the time of divorce; duration of marriage at the time of divorce and divorces involving couples with children less than 18 years. The information on marriages and divorces is important for understanding the formation and dissolution of marriage relationships and implications on the household structure and composition.



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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 2018. The 2018 mid-year population estimates [(*Mid-year population estimates, 2018* (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 high courts and various regional courts that deal with divorce matters. These 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 but whose divorce decrees were granted in 2018. 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 (2009 – 2018)

Information provided in Table 1, on page 21, shows that 131 240 civil marriages of South African citizens and permanent residents were registered at the Department of Home Affairs in 2018. Table 1 further shows that the number of registered marriages consistently declined in the ten-year period (2009 to 2018), except for a slight increase of 0,6% between 2015 and 2016. During the period 2009 to 2018, the highest number of marriages was recorded in 2009 (171 989) and the lowest number in 2018 (131 240). The 2018 figure of 131 240 civil marriages shows a decrease of 3,1% from the 135 458 marriages recorded in 2017.

The seasonal monthly variation in the registration of civil marriages is observed in Figure 1 on page 9. Generally, the warmer months (beginning from September and peaking in December) are the most popular months for solemnising marriages in South Africa. The results show that solemnisation of marriages has a second peak in March or April, depending on the month on which the Easter holiday falls for that particular year. In 2018, the highest number of marriages [16 736 (12,8%)] took place in December and the lowest number of marriages, [8 820 (6,7%)] occurred in July. Peaks seem to be linked to the school calendar for long holidays and warm months of the year, which allows many people to travel and participate in marriage celebrations.

2.1.2 Solemnisation of civil marriages

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

Table 2 on page 22 shows the distribution of civil marriages registered in 2018 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, 77 725 (59,2%) of the 131 240 marriages were solemnised by DHA marriage officers and 37 138 (28,3%) by 'Religious' rites. The type of solemnisation rite was not specified in 16 377 (12,5%) marriages. Table 2 further shows that 403 (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 2018, the observed crude civil marriage rate was 227 per 100 000 estimated resident population¹.

The table also provides information on provincial variations in marriage registration. The province of registration is not necessarily the province of usual residence of the couple, since couples could marry at any place of their choice. The results further indicate that, in 2018, the highest number of marriages was registered in Gauteng [33 300 (25,4%)] and the lowest in Northern Cape [4 004 (3,1%)]. When adjusted for population size, Northern Cape had the highest crude marriage rate of 330 per 100 000 resident population, followed by Free State with 310 per 100 000, Western Cape with 290 per 100 000 population. Mpumalanga, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal had the lowest crude marriage rates of 150, 160 and 190 per 100 000 population, respectively. Looking at ways of marriage solemnisation within each province, Free State had the highest proportion of marriages, 79,4% (7 278) solemnised by civil marriage officers. Western Cape recorded the highest proportion, 47,5% (9 755) of marriages solemnised by religious marriage officers. Wide differences of 'unspecified' way of solemnisation by

¹ The crude civil marriage rate refers to the number of civil marriages per 100 000 persons in the population.

province were noted. For example, 36,3% (2 493) of marriages in Mpumalanga had 'unspecified' method of solemnisation compared with 1,4% (129) in Free State.

2.1.3 Marital status at the time of civil marriage

Table 3 on page 23 shows the number of civil marriages for bridegrooms and brides by marital status at the time of marriage and province of registration. The table indicates that the majority of marriages in 2018 for both bridegrooms and brides were first-time marriages in all provinces. For bridegrooms, there were 107 747 (82,1%) never married men, 4 950 (3,8%) divorcees and 1 029 (0,8%) widowers. For the brides, there were 113 930 (86,8%) never married women whilst 3 111 (2,4%) were divorcees and 735 (0,6%) were widows. The marital status of 17 514 (13,3%) bridegrooms and 13 464 (10,3%) brides were unspecified. A high proportion of marriages between bridegrooms and brides marrying for the first time was observed in Limpopo where 8 006 (86,5%) and 8 579 (92,7%) 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, 4 950 (3,8%) bridegroom divorcees compared to 1 029 (0,8%) widowers and 3 111 (2,4%) bride divorcees compared to 735 (0,6%) widows.

The number of marriages by marital status of husband and age differences between spouses are shown in Table 4 on page 24. It is observed that irrespective of their marital status, men generally married women who had never been married. Thus 101 402 (94,1%) of never married men wedded never married women, 1 108 (1,0%) married divorcees and 550 (0,5%) married widows. In addition, irrespective of the fact that more male divorcees and widowers wedded never married women, the proportion of male divorcees who married female divorcees, 806 (16,3%) was higher than the proportion that married widows, 36 (0,7%). Similarly, the proportion of widowers who married widows, 119 (11,6%) was higher than the proportion that married female divorcees, 32 (3,1%).

Table 4 also suggests that men tend to marry younger women, as 100 305 (76,4%) of the 131 240 bridegrooms were older than their brides. However, 20 705 (15,8%) bridegrooms were younger than their brides and 10 227 (7,8%) were of the same age as their brides. This observed age pattern is the same irrespective of the marital status of the bridegroom at the time of marriage (see Figures 2a to 2c on pages 10–11). However, the magnitude differs by the marital status of the spouses at the time of marriage. For example, 46,0% of never married men who married divorcees were younger than their brides (see Figure 2a) and 19,4% of male divorcees who married widowed women were also younger than their brides (see Figure 2c). A relatively smaller percentage (5,2%) was observed for male divorcees marrying never married women who were older than them (see Figure 2c).

2.1.4 Age at the time of civil marriage

Population scientists are interested in the age at first marriage or union because of its theoretical link to exposure to the possibility of pregnancy, childbearing and ultimately to fertility (Bongaarts, 1978). This link tends to be weakened in populations where pre-marital fertility is widespread. Nevertheless, age at first marriage or union continues to be a good proxy for measuring not only fertility but other health and socio-economic indicators relating particularly to the role and status of women in society. The importance of this indicator is, to some extent, underscored in South Africa through the marriage legislations that put restrictions on marriages involving children under 18 years. These children require the consent of a parent, a guardian or a commissioner of child welfare before entering into a marriage. In addition to the above consent, boys younger than 18 years and girls younger than 15 years of age require the consent of the Minister of Home Affairs before they can get married.

In 2018, marriages of 2 bridegrooms and 53 brides aged less than 18 years were registered, with 50 of these brides marrying for the first time (see Table 5 on page 25). Figure 3 on page 12 indicates that the highest

number of never married men [26 779 (20,4%)] were aged 30–34 years whereas the highest number of never married women [32 378 (24,7%)] were aged 25–29 years. There were more never married women compared to never married men at younger ages (less than 35 years) and vice versa at older ages (35 years and older). Figure 4a on page 13 shows the median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage. Median ages of bridegrooms increased from 35 years in 2014 to 37 years in 2018 and those for brides increased from 31 years to 33 years during the same period.

The median age of bridegrooms increased from 35 years in 2014 to 37 years in 2018 and that of brides increased from 31 years to 33 years during the same period. Figure 4a to Figure 4d on pages 13 and 14 further show that women generally entered marriage at younger ages than men. In addition, the median ages 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 35 years and 31 years respectively in 2018, showing an age difference of three years (see Figure 4b). For remarriages, the median age for widowers and widows in 2018 (see Figure 4c) were 56 years and 34 years respectively, resulting in a 22-year age gap. The median age for widowers consistently increased from 49 years in 2014 to 56 years in 2018. The median age of widows fluctuated between 29 years and 34 years during 2014 and 2018.

The median age at marriage for divorcees are shown in Figure 4d. It is observed that the median age for male divorcees ranged between 54 years in 2014 to 56 years in 2018 whereas the median age of female divorcee ranged between 48 years in 2014 and 50 years in 2018. There was a six-year age difference in the median ages between male and female divorcees who married in 2018.

2.2 Customary marriages

2.2.1 Trends in the registration of customary marriages (2009–2018)

In 2018, 3 160 customary marriages were registered at the Department of Home Affairs, indicating an increase of 22,1% from 2 588 customary marriages registered in 2017. It is observed from Table 6 on page 28 that the number of registered customary marriages fluctuated between 2009 and 2018. The highest number of registered customary marriages was recorded in 2009 (13 506) whilst the lowest number was recorded in 2017 (2 588). The observed crude customary marriage rate was 5 per 100 000 estimated resident population in 2018².

The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, 1998 (Act No. 120 of 1998) prescribes that customary marriages that were entered into after the commencement of this Act must be registered within a period of three months after the conclusion of the marriage and those entered before the Act to be registered within 12 months of the commencement of the Act. Figure 5 on page 15 shows that the majority of customary marriages were registered later than the year of marriage. In 2018, about 16,1% of marriages were registered the same year it took place.

2.2.2 Age at the time of customary marriage

The results presented in Table 7 on page 29 show that in 2018, about 1 495 (47,3%) of the registered customary marriages were from KwaZulu-Natal followed by Limpopo with 676 (21,4%). The other seven (7) provinces had less than 10% each. The age distribution of bridegrooms and brides at the time of customary marriage is presented in Table 8 on page 30. In 2018, there were 7 (0,2%) bridegrooms and 139 (4,4%) brides who were younger than 18 years.

² The crude customary marriage rate refers to the number of customary marriages per 100 000 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 2014 and 2018. The median ages of both bridegrooms and brides fluctuated over the period 2014 and 2018. The median age of bridegrooms fluctuated between 33 years and 35 years whereas that of bride fluctuated between 27 years and 29 years. A further comparison of the ages of bridegrooms and brides (see Figure 7 on page 16) shows that in 2018, 86,1% of bridegrooms were older than their brides whilst 8,4% were younger than their brides, and 5,3% 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 (2014–2018)

Table 9 on page 33 shows that in 2018, 1 650 civil unions were registered (including the registration of two civil unions of South African citizens and permanent residents living outside South Africa). In 2018, the crude civil union rate was 3 per 100 000 estimated resident population³. In general, the number of civil unions registered in South Africa increased over the five-year period. Civil unions registered increased by 21,6% from 1 357 in 2017 to 1 650 in 2018. The provincial distribution of civil unions registered in 2018 indicates that Gauteng 632 (38,3%) and Western Cape 465 (28,2%) were the provinces with the highest number of registrations of civil unions. In total, 66,5% of civil unions in 2018 were registered in these two provinces. The lowest number of registered civil unions was recorded in Limpopo 13 (0,8%) and Northern Cape 20 (1,2%).

2.3.2 Age at the time of civil union

The number of civil unions classified by the ages of spouse-1 and spouse-2 at the time of the solemnisation of civil union is presented in Table 10 on page 34. Spouses are distinguished as spouse-1 and spouse-2, based on the information completed by the spouses at the time of civil union registration. Table 10 on page 34 shows that the highest number of spouses-1 and spouses-2 were aged 30–34 with [419 (25,4%)] and [404 (24,5%)] respectively.

As observed in Figure 8 on page 16, the median ages of spouses-1 were higher than those of spouses-2. The median age of spouses-1 increased by one year from 35 years in 2017 to 36 years in 2018 whereas the median age of spouses-2 increased by a year from 33 years in 2017 to 34 years in 2018. Over the five-year period, the yearly differences in the median ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 ranged between two and three years. Information in Figure 9 on page 17 further shows that in 2018, 59,5% of spouses-1 were older than their spouses, whilst 32,6% were younger than their spouses and 7,9% were of the same age as their spouses.

³ The crude civil union rate refers to the number of civil unions per 100 000 persons in the population

2.3.3 Marital status at the time of civil union

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

3. Divorces

3.1 Trends in divorces (2009 – 2018)

The 2018 divorce data reported in this statistical release is based on 25 284 completed divorce forms that Stats SA received and processed by the end of December 2019. The number (25 284) indicates a decrease of 106 (0,4%) divorces from the 25 390 cases processed in 2017 (see Table 11 on page 37). The table shows that the total number of divorces decreased from 2009 to 2011 followed by a consistent increase in the years 2012 to 2017 and a slight decrease of 0,4% between 2017 and 2018. In 2018, about 138 divorces were granted for same-sex couples. The observed crude divorce rate was 44 divorces per 100 000 estimated resident population in 2018⁴.

Table 11 also provides data on divorces classified by population group and the year in which the divorce was granted. In 2018, black African couples had the highest number of divorces compared to other population groups during the ten-year period (2009 to 2018). Figure 14 on page 20 demonstrates the number of divorces and crude divorce rate by population group. In 2018, most divorces were filed by the black African population group 11 721 (46,4%) followed by the white population group 5 780 (22,9%), coloured population group 4 540 (18,0%) and then the Indian/Asian population group 1 214 (4,8%). The crude divorce rates by population groups show that the white population group had the highest rate of 124 per 100 000 estimated resident population followed by the coloured with 89 per 100 000, Indian/Asian population groups with 82 per 100 000 estimated resident population. The black African population had 25 per 100 000 estimated resident population.

Table 12 on page 38 indicates information on the occupation of husbands and wives at the time of divorce. It is noted that a high proportion of husbands (26,2%) and wives (29,7%) did not specify the type of occupation they were engaged in at the time of divorce. In addition, 18,7% and 24,9% of husbands and wives respectively were not economically active at the time of divorce. Most male divorcees were managers and administrators 3 435 (13,6%) and 3 113 (12,3%) were employed in professional, semi-professional and technical occupations while female divorcees were largely in professional, semi-professional and technical occupations 3 761 (14,9%) and clerical and sales occupations 2 986 (11,8%).

3.2 Characteristics of plaintiffs

The 2018 data presented in Table 13 on page 39 show that more wives than husbands, 13 218 (52,3%) women compared to 8 791 (34,8%) men initiated divorce proceedings and 1 523 (6,0%) divorces were initiated by both husband and wife. The sex of the plaintiff was not specified in 1 752 (6,9%) cases. With the exception of women from the black African population group who had a lower proportion of plaintiffs (47,4%), the proportion of women plaintiffs from the other population groups was above 50,0%. The plaintiffs for the interracial couples show that 58,0% of the divorces were filed by wives. The proportion of women plaintiffs for the white population group, coloured population group and Indian/Asian population group were 57,7%, 57,4% and 54,4% respectively. Among black African divorcees, divorce initiated by both partners constituted about 8,4%.

Table 14 on page 39 provides information on the province and sex of the plaintiff. The provincial distribution indicates that Gauteng (6 623), Western Cape (6 274), KwaZulu-Natal (3 868) and Eastern Cape (3 325) were the provinces with the highest number of divorces granted. Together the four provinces contributed 79,5% of the

⁴ The crude divorce rate refers to the number of divorces per 100 000 persons in the population

divorces granted in 2018. 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 (14,0%).

3.3 Number of divorces by way of solemnisation of marriage

Information presented in Table 15 on page 40 shows that 11 543 (45,7%) of the 2018 divorce cases were from marriages that were solemnised by civil rites and 11 535 (45,6%) by religious rites. About 69,3% of divorces from the white population group and two-thirds (67,0%) of divorces from the coloured population group were from marriages that were solemnised by religious rites. Most divorces from the black African and Indian/Asian population groups were from marriages that were solemnised by civil rites, 66,8% and 55,4% respectively.

3.4 Number of times married

Results presented in Table 16 on page 40 show that the 2018 divorce cases for both men and women were mainly from individuals who had married once. More than 80,0% of divorces for men and women were from first-time marriages compared to 11,8% of men and 10,2% of women from second-time marriages respectively. 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 2018 were 45 years for males and 41 years for females, indicating that generally, divorcing males were older than divorcing females, with a difference of about four years (see Figure 10 on page 17). The pattern of median ages in 2018 by population group showed that black African and white males had the highest median age of 45 years, while the Indian/Asian population group recorded the lowest median ages 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 (four years) compared to the coloured, Indian/Asian and white population groups, with median age differences of two to three years between males and females.

Detailed information on the age and population group of divorcees is presented in Figure 11 on page 18 for males and in Figure 12 on page 18 for females, as well as in Tables 17 and 18 on pages 41 and 42 respectively. Although there were differences in the ages at which most men and women from the various population groups divorced, the age patterns were quite similar. There were fewer divorces among the younger (less than 25 years old) and the older (65 years and older) divorcees, however divorces start later, mostly at 35-39 years old for black African males than for other population groups where they start mostly from 30-34 years. For males, the peak age group for black African and Indian/Asian population groups was 40 to 44 years while that for coloured population group was 35 to 39 years and that of the white population group was 45 to 49 years (see Figure 11). In the case of females, the peak age group at divorce was 35 to 39 years for all population groups (see Figure 12).

3.6 Duration of marriage of divorcing couples and population group

Statistics from the annual divorce data do not give a comprehensive picture of the number of marriages ending in divorce. However, there is data on the duration of marriages for divorces granted in 2018. Table 19 and Table 20 on pages 43 and 44 respectively, show that the largest number [6 908 (27,3%)] of divorces were for marriages that lasted between five and nine years. This group is followed by marriages that lasted between 10 and 14 years [5 259 (20,8%)] and marriages that lasted for less than five years [4 296 (17,0%)]. Results showed that four in ten divorces 11 204 (44,3%) of the 25 284 in 2018 were marriages that lasted for less than 10 years.

According to results given in Figure 13 on page 19, irrespective of the population group, the highest proportion of divorces occurred to couples who had been married between five and nine years. Population group variations shows that 28,8% of divorces from the black African; 26,0% from white, 25,6% from coloured and 20,8% from

Indian/Asian population groups were from marriages that lasted between five and nine years. The white population group had the highest proportion (21,2%) 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 fourteen years of marriage. The proportion of divorces from the Indian/Asian population group is higher than the other population groups between ages 15 and 34 years. .

3.7 Divorces involving couples with children less than 18 years

In 2018, 14 302 (56,6%) of the 25 284 divorces had children younger than 18 years whereas 10 982 (43,4%) divorces had no children (see Table 21 on page 45). The profile of white divorcees showed that more than half of the recorded divorces were without children (54,3%). Looking at the black African and coloured and divorcees, divorces involving couples with children constituted about 61,3% and 60,5% respectively. Table 22 on page 45 shows that 50,6% of children affected by divorce were from the black African population group; 19,9% from the coloured population group; 17,8% from the white population group and 4,2% from the Indian/Asian population group.

4. Summary and concluding remarks

This statistical release provides information on civil and customary marriages, civil unions and divorces for 2018, 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, 131 240 civil marriages were registered in South Africa in 2018, with more than half 77 725 (59,2%) being solemnised by DHA marriage officers. The highest number of civil marriages was registered in Gauteng (33 300), followed by KwaZulu-Natal (21 180) and Western Cape (19 478), and the lowest was registered in Northern Cape (4 004). The majority of civil marriages in 2018 for both bridegrooms (107 747) and brides (113 930) were first time marriages, with women generally entering into marriage at younger ages than men.

The number of registered customary marriages was 3 160 in 2018, which increased by 22,1% from a total of 2 588 recorded in 2017. The majority of bridegrooms [2 720 (86,1%)] were older than their brides, with the gap in median ages at registration of customary marriage much wider than for other types of marriages. The number of registered civil unions in South Africa in 2018 was 1 650, most of which were registered in Gauteng (632) and Western Cape (465), and lowest in Northern Cape (20) and Limpopo (13).

With regard to divorces, the data showed that 25 284 divorces were granted in 2018. Generally, there was an increase in the proportion of divorces for black Africans and a decline for the white population group. Divorces were mainly from people who had married for the first time. There were more wives than husbands who filed the divorce, with husbands generally getting divorced at a later age than wives. The provincial distribution shows that Gauteng (6 623), Western Cape (6 274), KwaZulu-Natal (3 868) and Eastern Cape (3 325) were the provinces with the highest number of divorces granted. In 2018, about 23 727 children aged less than 18 years were affected by divorces that took place.

Overall, the information provided in this release showed fluctuations over time in the number of marriages, 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, 2014 – 2018

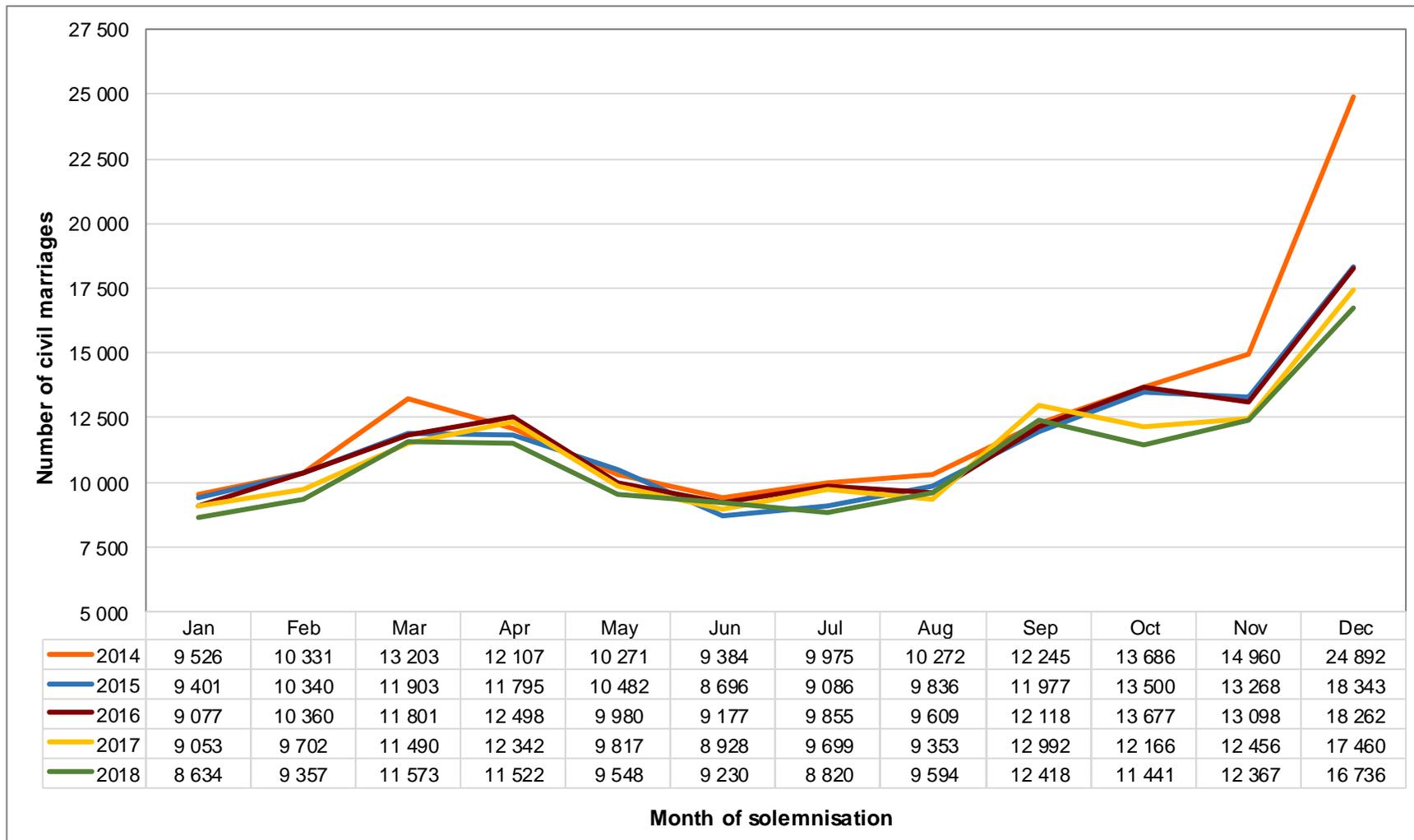
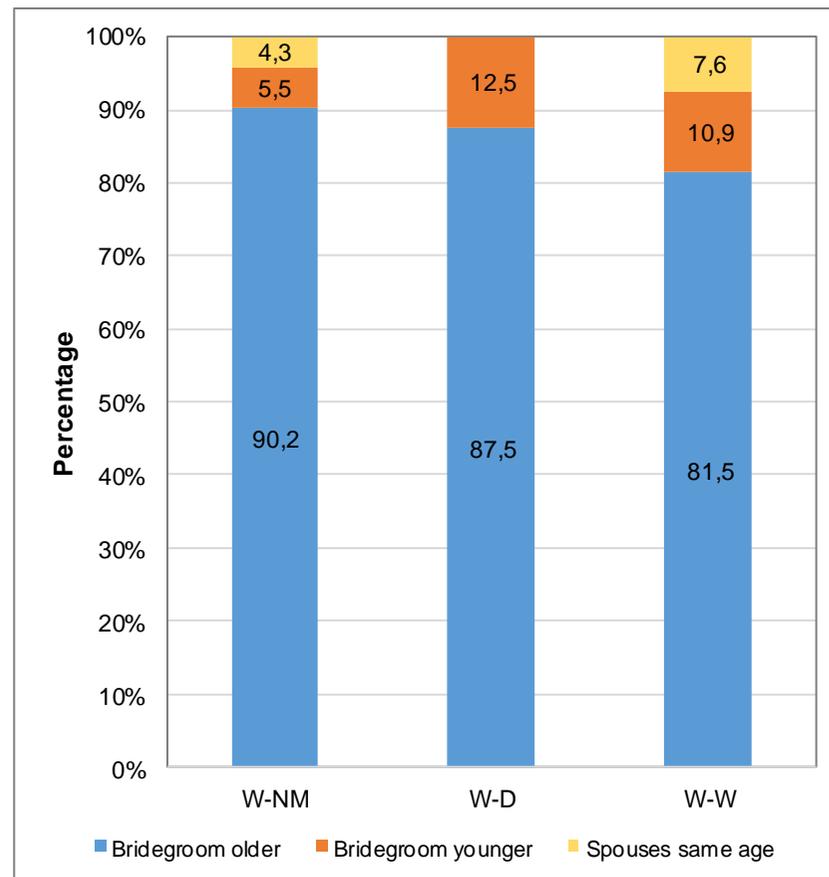
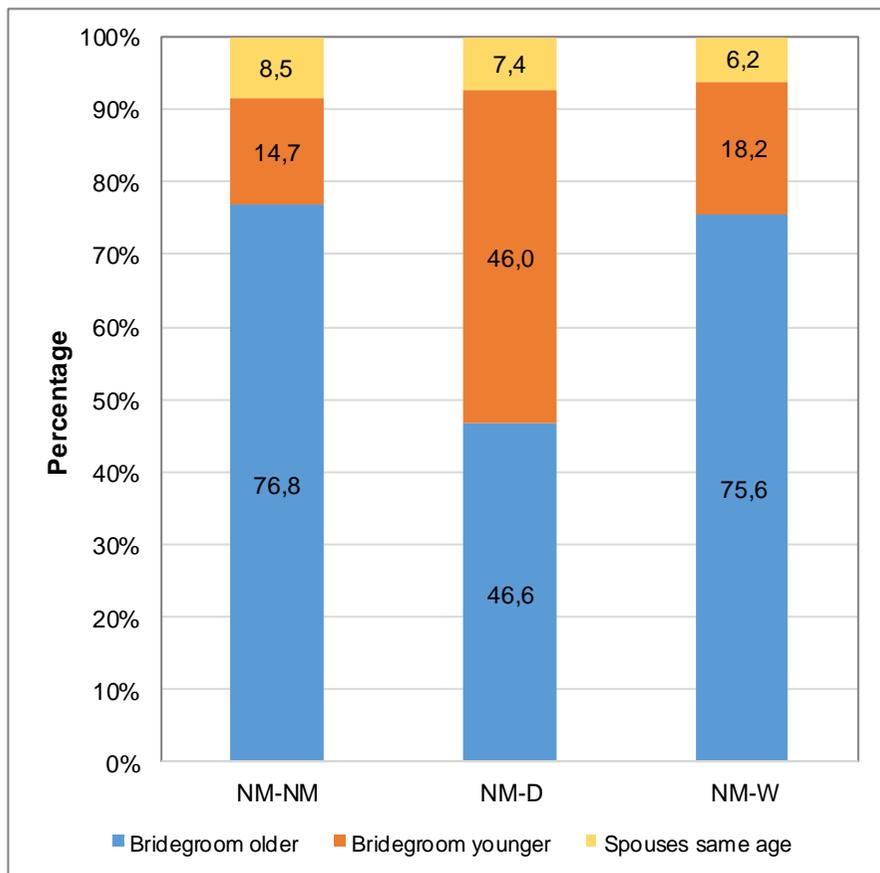


Figure 2a – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (never married men), 2018

Figure 2b – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (widowers), 2018



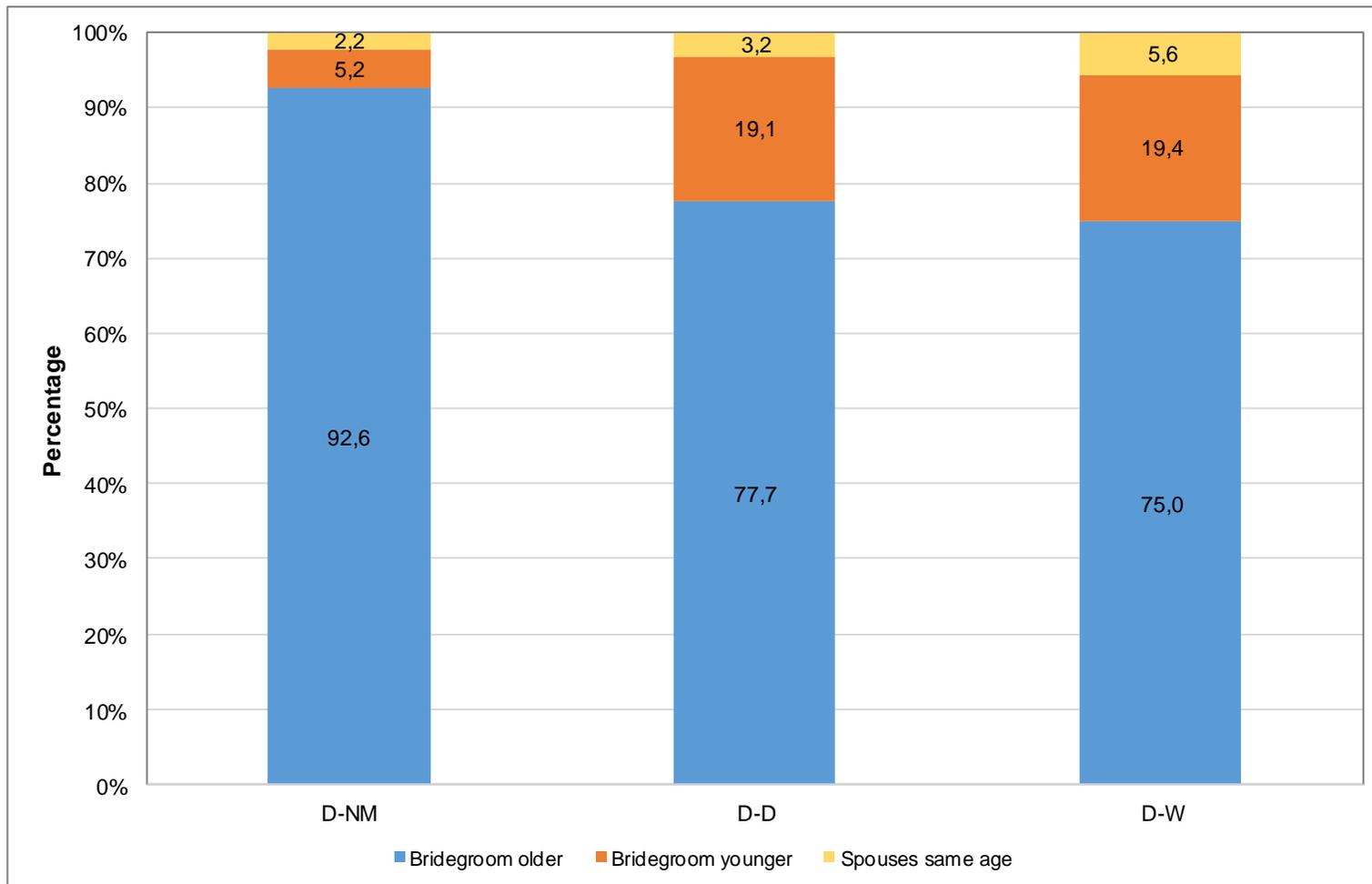
*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding up

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

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

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

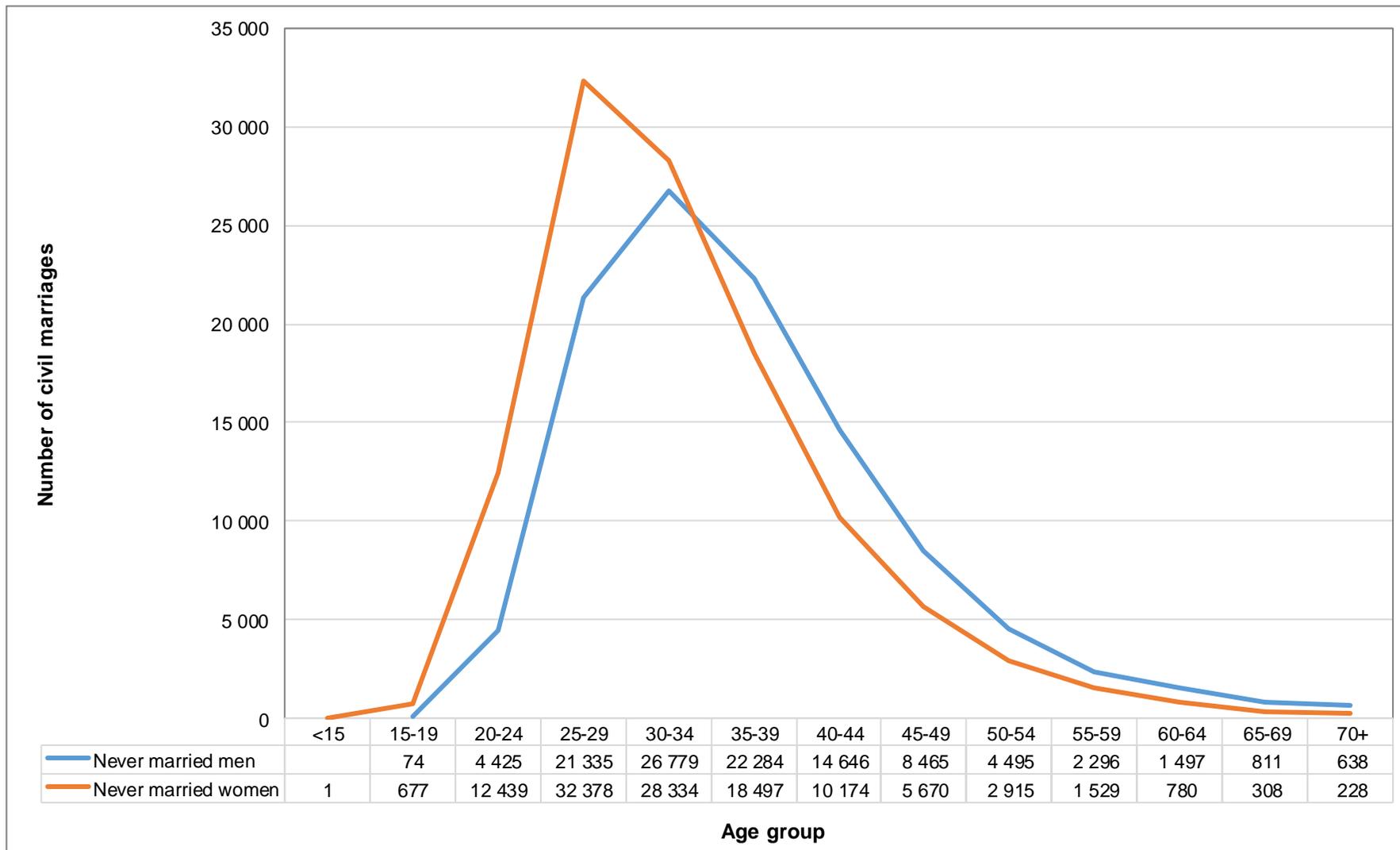
Figure 2c – Percentage distribution of civil marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage (male divorcees), 2018



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

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

Figure 3 – Number of civil marriages for never married men and women by age group, 2018



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

Figure 4a – Median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of civil marriage, 2014 – 2018

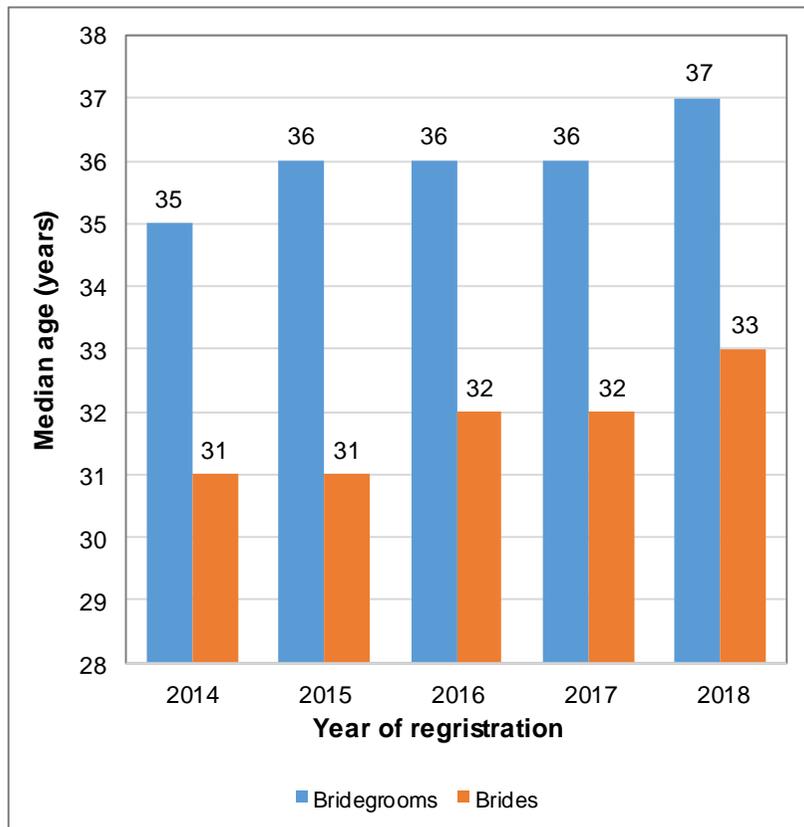


Figure 4b – Median ages of never married men and women at the time of marriage, 2014 – 2018

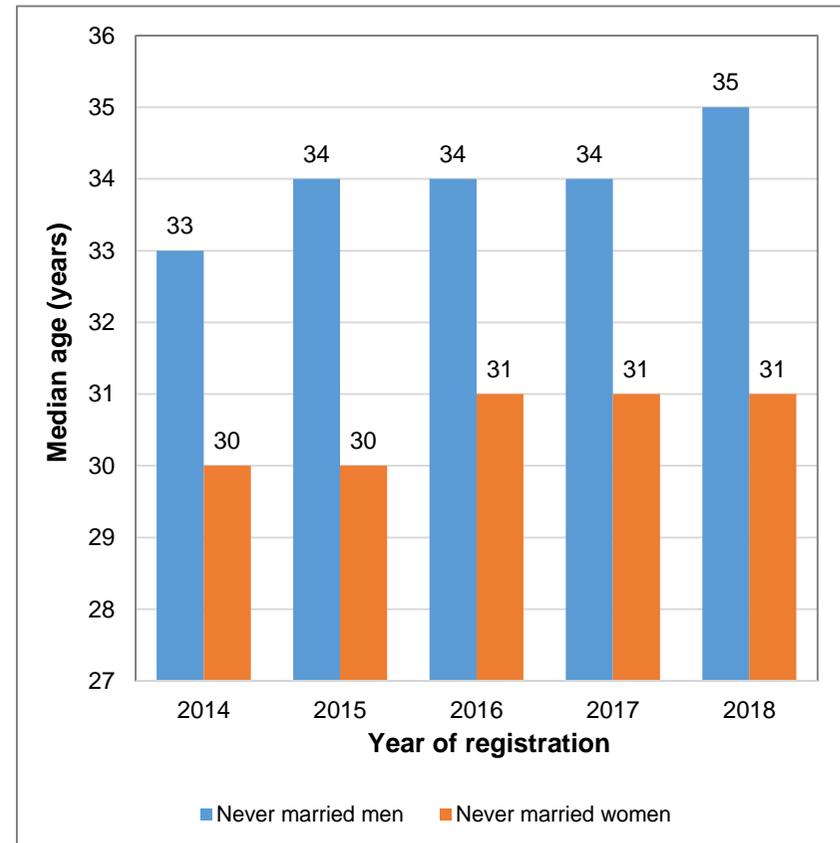


Figure 4c – Median ages of widowers and widows at the time of civil marriage, 2014 – 2018

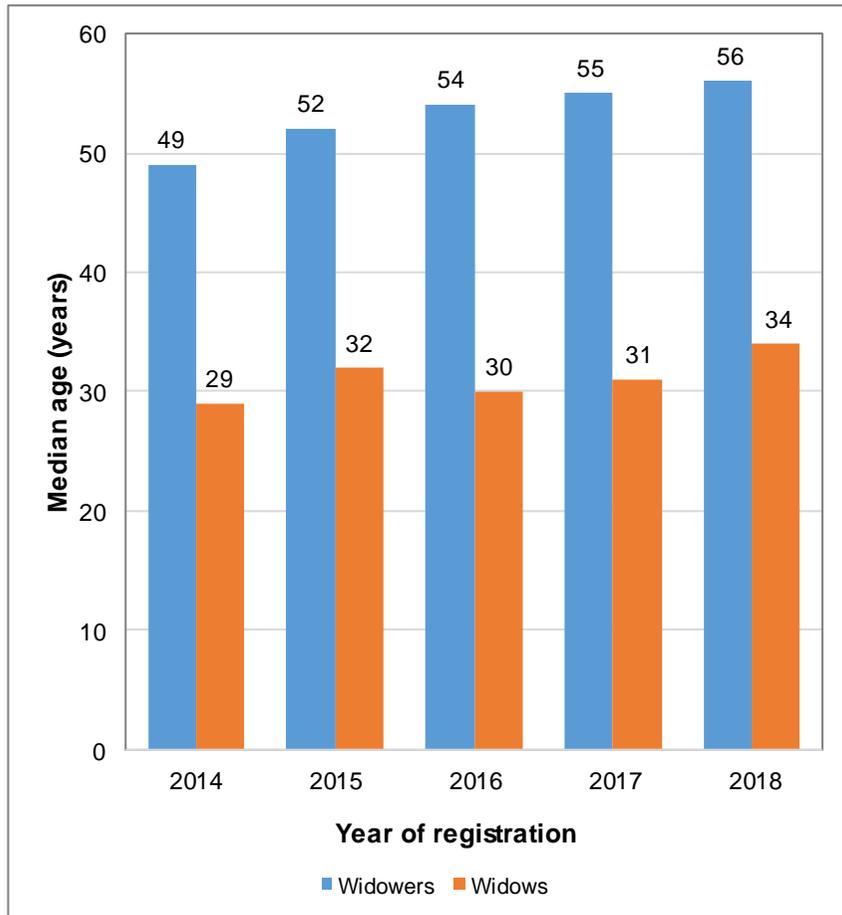


Figure 4d – Median ages of male and female divorcees at the time of civil marriage, 2014 – 2018

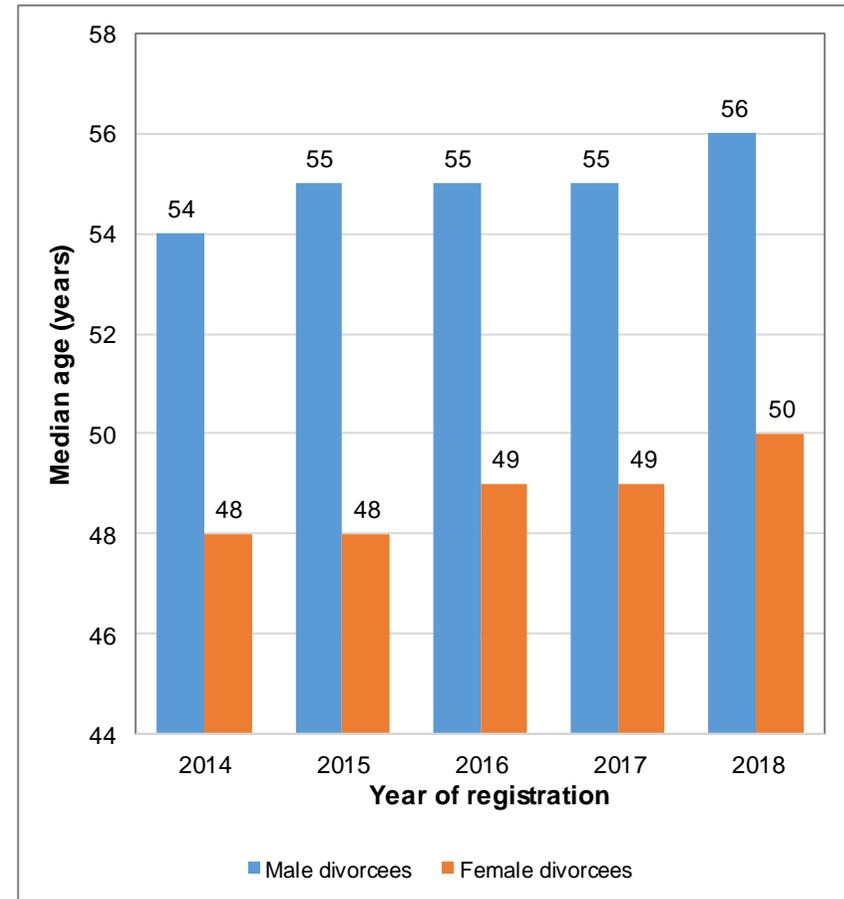
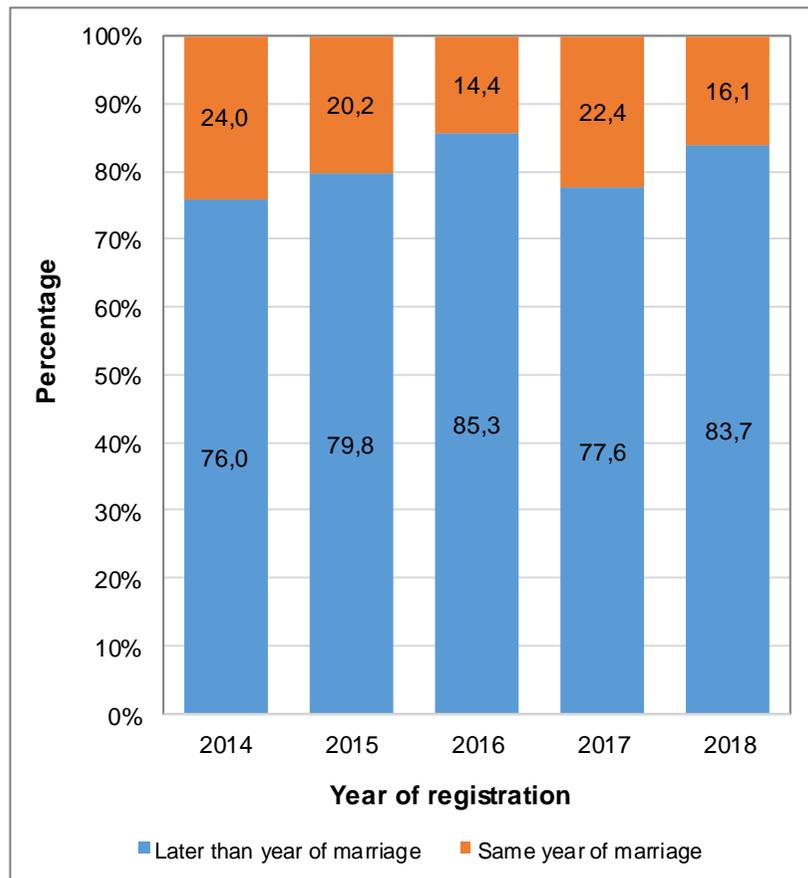


Figure 5 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by year of marriage and time it took to register the marriage, 2014 – 2018



*Excluding 0,3% and 0,2% of unspecified year of registration in 2016 and 2018 respectively.

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

Figure 6 – Median ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of customary marriage, 2014 – 2018

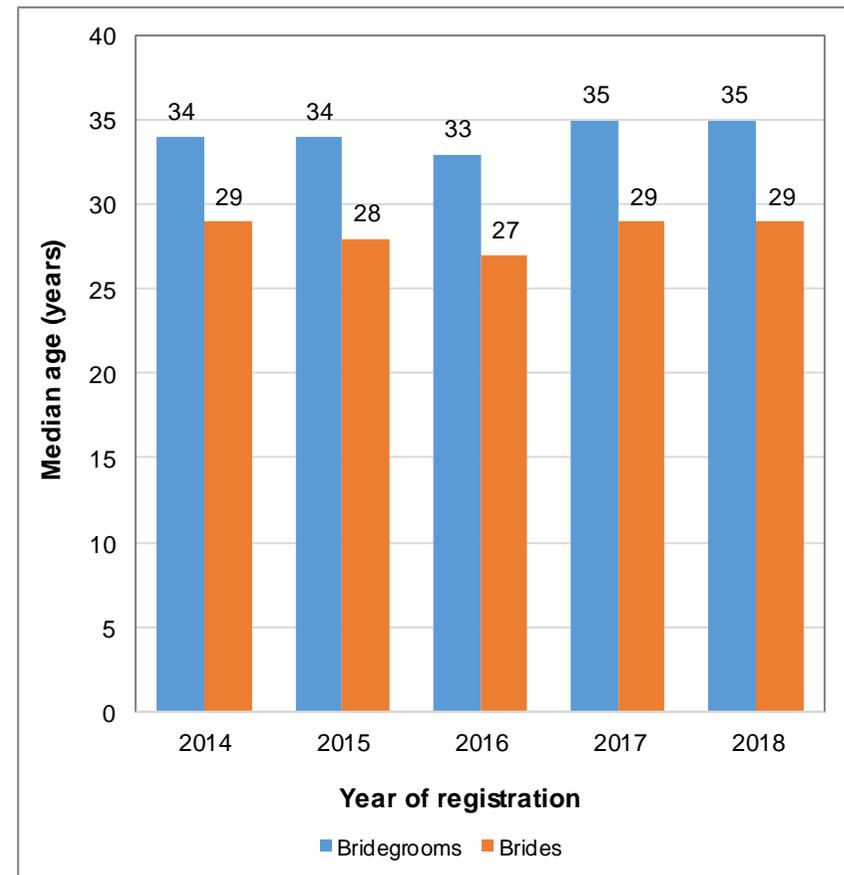
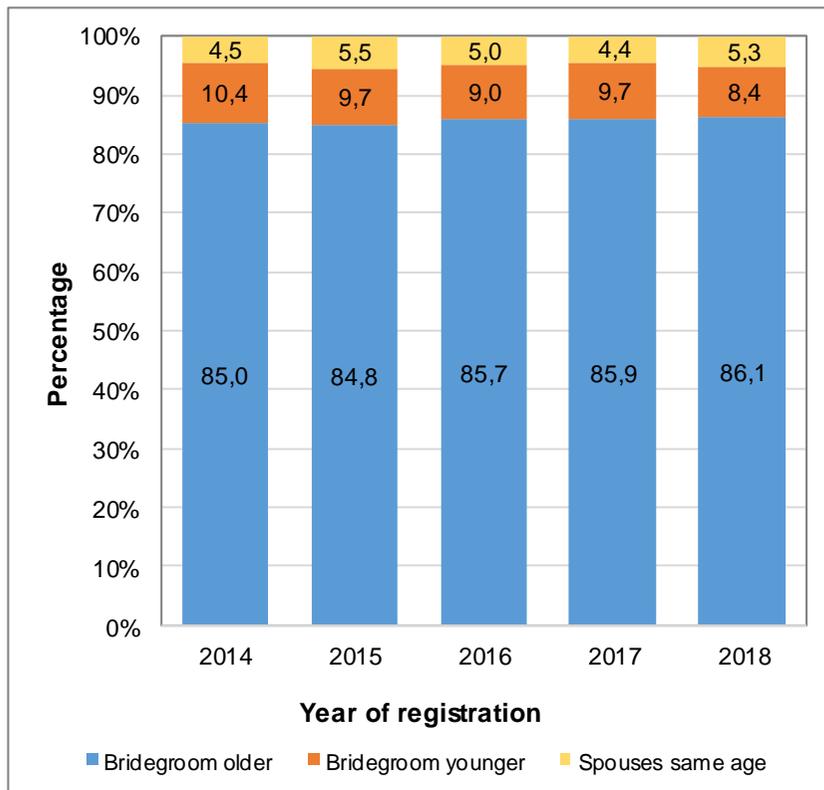


Figure 7 – Percentage distribution of customary marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage, 2014 – 2018



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

Figure 8 – Median ages of spouses in civil unions, 2014 – 2018

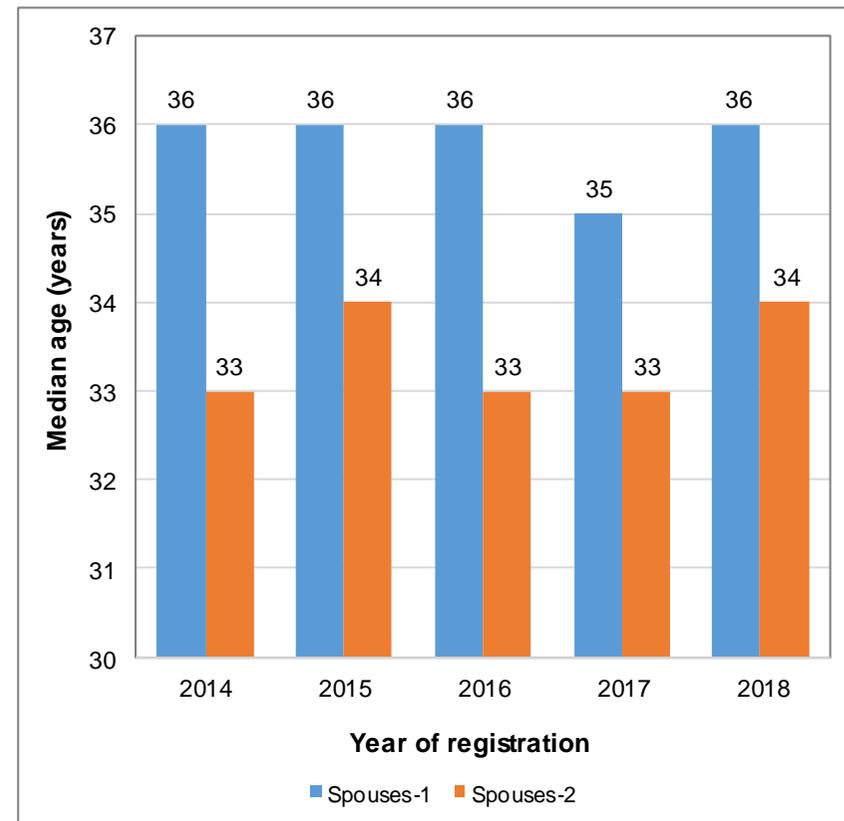
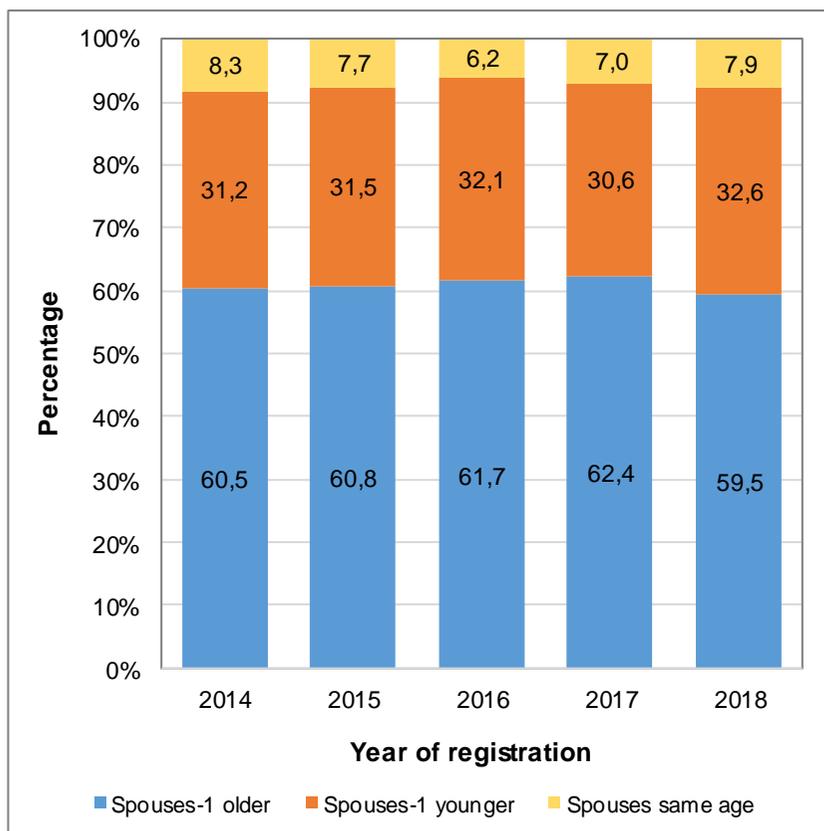


Figure 9 – Percentage distribution of civil unions by age differences between spouses at the time of union, 2014 – 2018



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

Figure 10 – Median ages of divorcees by sex and population group, 2018

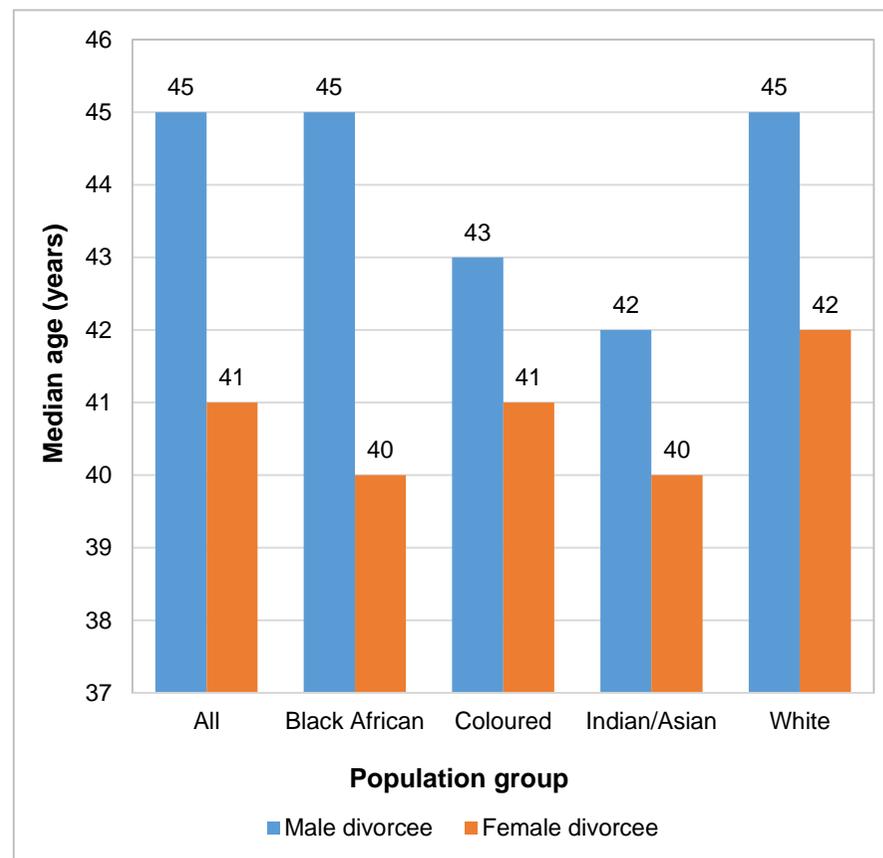


Figure 11 – The proportions of divorces by age and population group (males), 2018

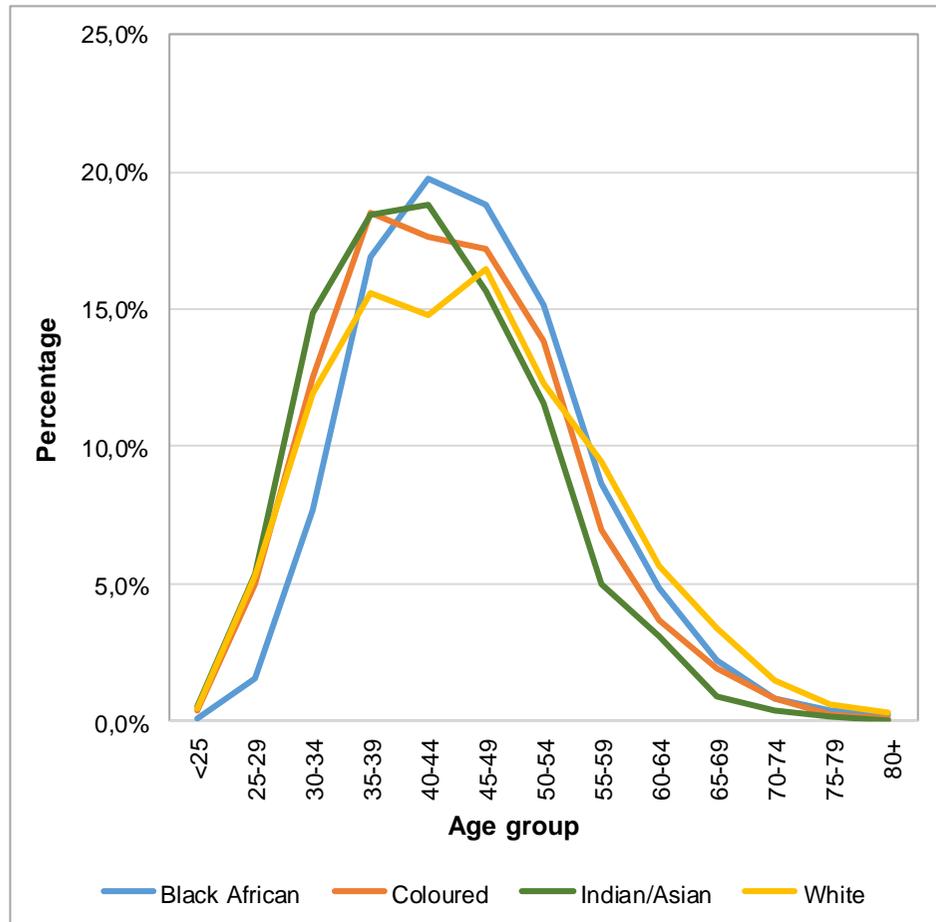


Figure 12 – The proportions of divorces by age group and population group (females), 2018

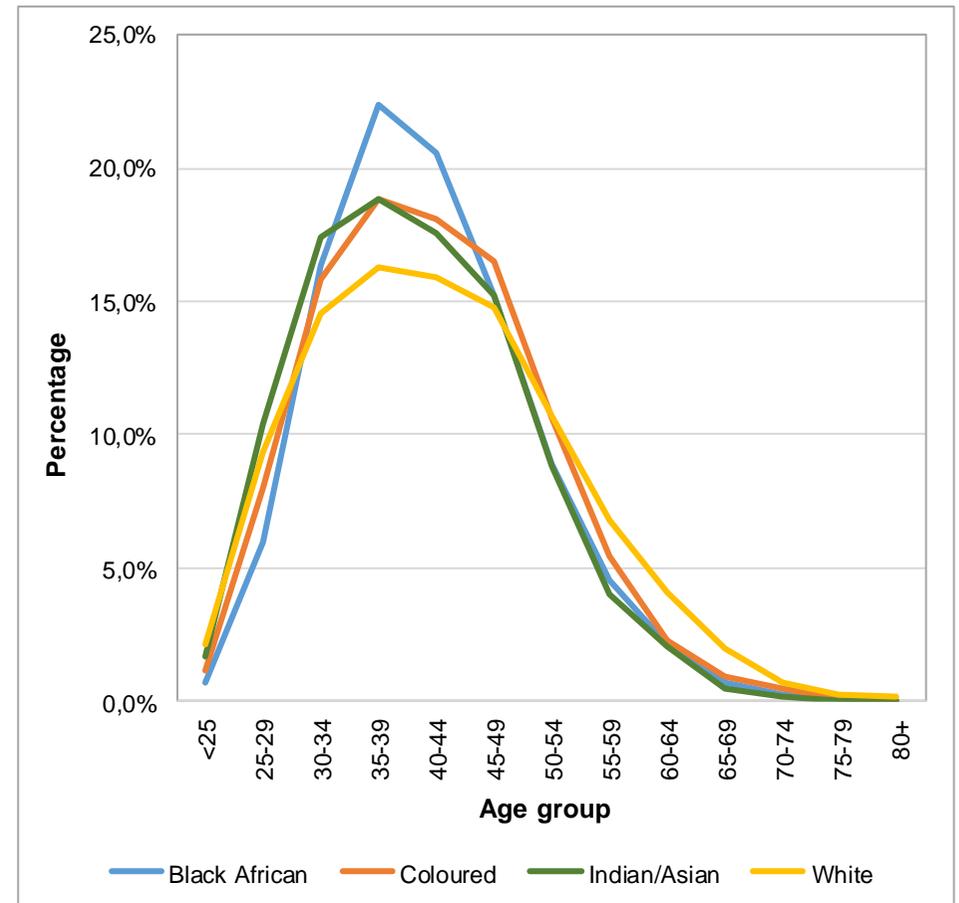


Figure 13 – The proportions of divorces by duration of marriage and population group, 2018

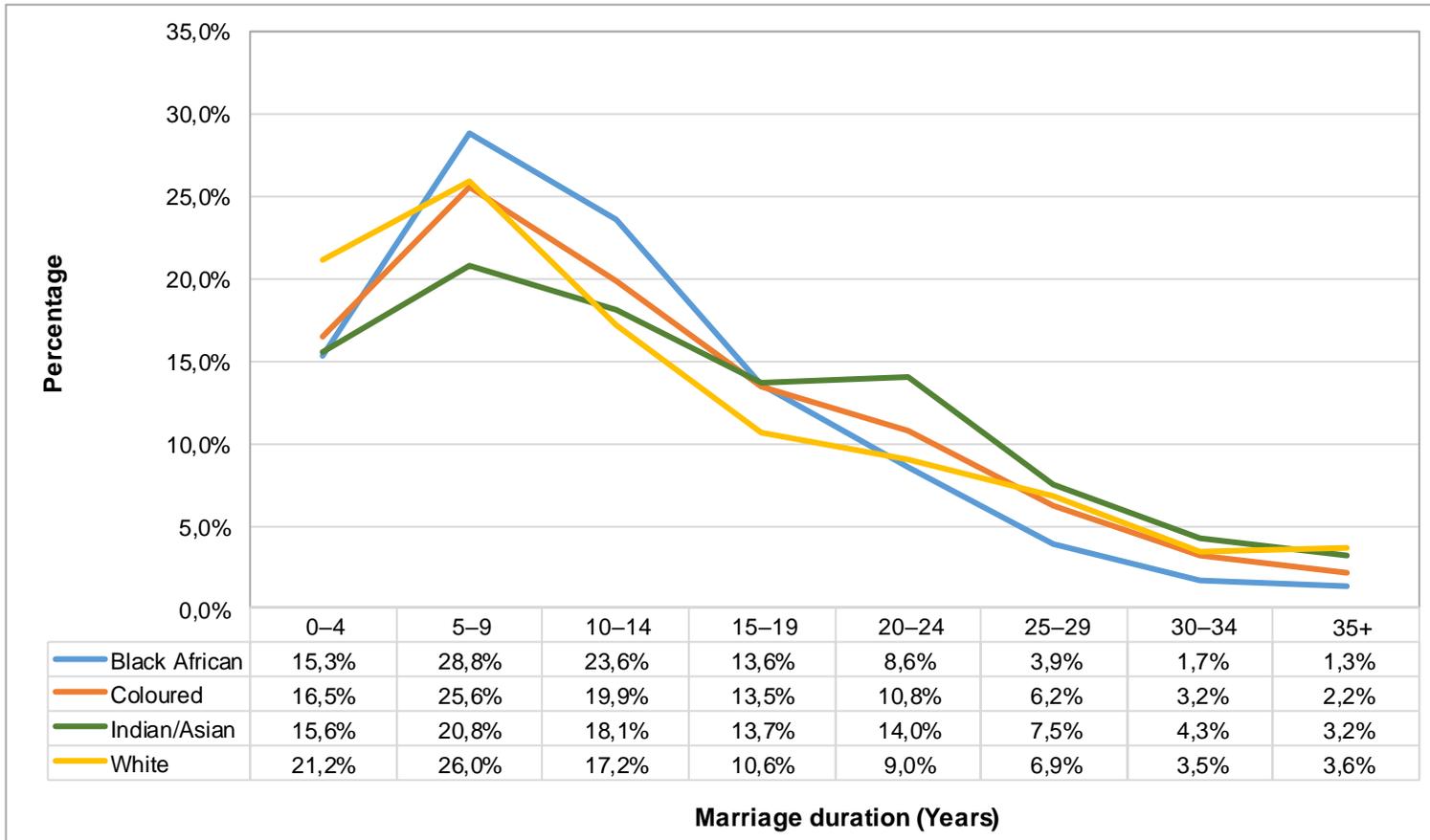


Figure 14 – Number of divorces and crude divorce rates by population group, 2018

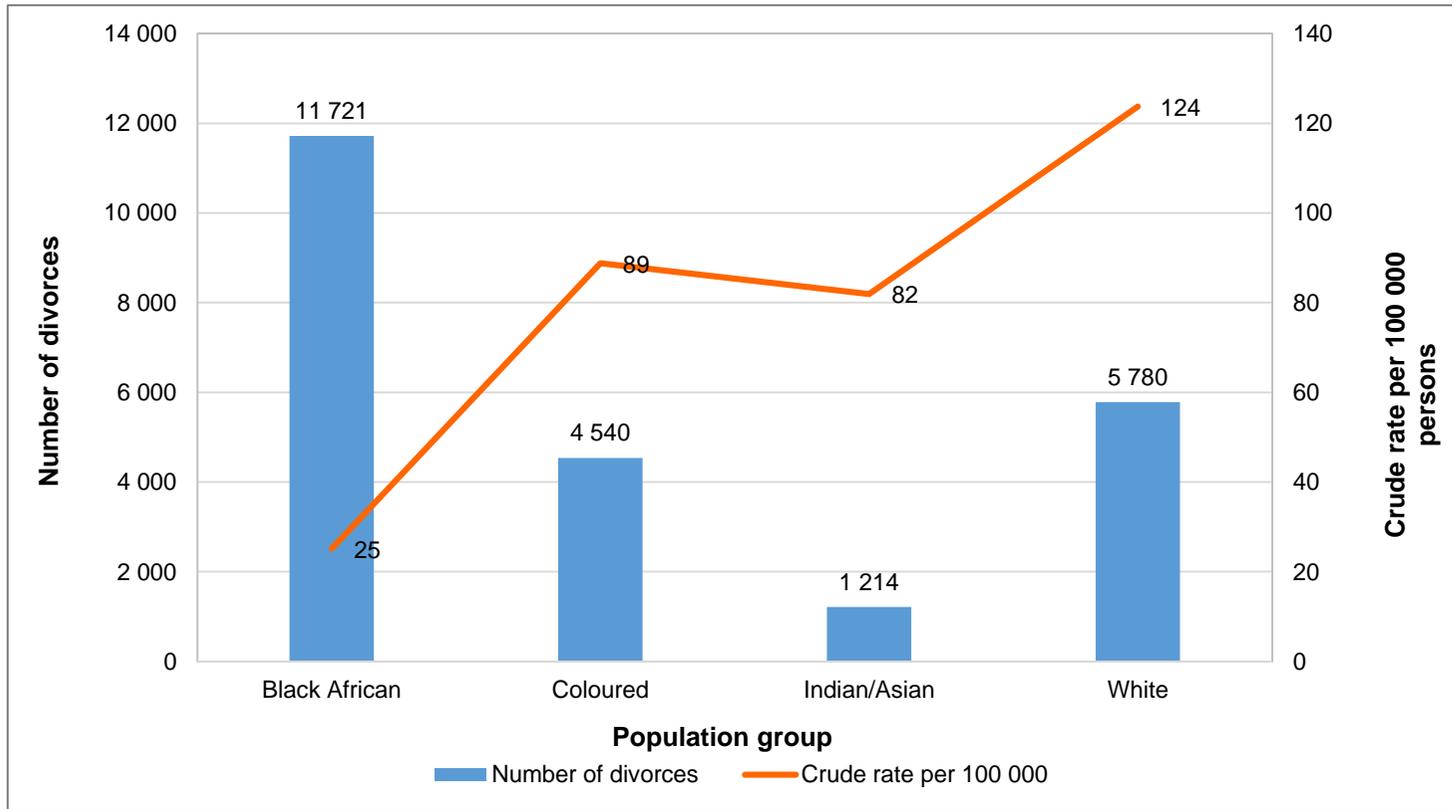


Table 1 – Number of registered civil marriages in South Africa, 2009 – 2018

Year of registration	Number of civil marriages
2009	171 989
2010	170 826
2011	167 264
2012	161 112
2013	158 642
2014	150 852
2015	138 627
2016	139 512
2017	135 458
2018	131 240

Table 2 – Number and percentage distribution of civil marriages by province of marriage registration and way of solemnisation, 2018

Province of registration	Grand Total	Way of solemnisation			%			
		DHA	Religious	Unspecified	Total	DHA	Religious	Unspecified
Grand Total	131 240	77 725	37 138	16 377	100,0	59,2	28,3	12,5
Western Cape	19 478	9 755	9 251	472	100,0	50,1	47,5	2,4
Eastern Cape	14 080	7 744	4 242	2 094	100,0	55,0	30,1	14,9
Northern Cape	4 004	2 670	1 072	262	100,0	66,7	26,8	6,5
Free State	9 165	7 278	1 758	129	100,0	79,4	19,2	1,4
KwaZulu-Natal	21 180	11 939	6 414	2 827	100,0	56,4	30,3	13,3
North West	9 071	6 553	2 278	240	100,0	72,2	25,1	2,6
Gauteng	33 300	20 160	6 828	6 312	100,0	60,5	20,5	19,0
Mpumalanga	6 866	2 714	1 659	2 493	100,0	39,5	24,2	36,3
Limpopo	9 258	6 811	1 043	1 404	100,0	73,6	11,3	15,2
Outside RSA	403	392	10	1	100,0	97,3	2,5	0,2
Unknown	28	14	10	4	100,0	50,0	35,7	14,3
Unspecified	4 407	1 695	2 573	139	100,0	38,5	58,4	3,2

Table 3 – Number of civil marriages by province of registration and marital status of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2018

Province of registration	Bridegroom					Bride				
	Total	Never married men	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never married women	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	131 240	107 747	4 950	1 029	17 514	131 240	113 930	3 111	735	13 464
Western Cape	19 478	15 358	737	25	3 358	19 478	16 159	567	12	2 740
Eastern Cape	14 080	11 625	601	84	1 770	14 080	12 440	332	43	1 265
Northern Cape	4 004	3 263	201	23	517	4 004	3 464	143	15	382
Free State	9 165	7 499	408	75	1 183	9 165	7 953	262	97	853
KwaZulu-Natal	21 180	17 938	786	239	2 217	21 180	19 019	391	120	1 650
North West	9 071	7 642	361	53	1 015	9 071	8 089	207	35	740
Gauteng	33 300	26 712	1 137	257	5 194	33 300	28 055	854	206	4 185
Mpumalanga	6 866	5 723	256	98	789	6 866	6 053	125	69	619
Limpopo	9 258	8 006	330	131	791	9 258	8 579	121	85	473
Outside RSA	403	343	8	1	51	403	354	6	1	42
Unknown	28	24	-	-	4	28	25	1	-	2
Unspecified	4 407	3 614	125	43	625	4 407	3 740	102	52	513

Table 4 – Number of civil marriages by age differences between spouses at the time of marriage and marital status of husband, 2018

Age differences	Grand Total	Never Married					Divorcee				
		Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	131 240	107 747	101 402	1 108	550	4 687	4 950	2 945	806	36	1 163
Bridegroom older	100 305	81 016	77 851	516	416	2 233	4 310	2 726	626	27	931
Bridegroom younger	20 705	17 633	14 929	510	100	2 094	485	152	154	7	172
Same age	10 227	9 096	8 620	82	34	360	154	66	26	2	60
Unspecified	3	2	2	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-

Age differences	Widower					Unspecified				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Grand Total	1 029	853	32	119	25	17 514	8 730	1 165	30	7 589
Bridegroom older	919	769	28	97	25	14 060	7 784	747	21	5 508
Bridegroom younger	64	47	4	13	-	2 523	651	335	7	1 530
Same age	46	37	-	9	-	931	295	83	2	551

Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides; and marital status at the time of marriage, 2018

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
Total	131 240	107 747	4 950	1 029	17 514	131 240	113 930	3 111	735	13 464
<18	2	1	-	1	-	53	50	2	1	-
18	16	16	-	-	-	172	161	-	11	-
19	57	57	-	-	-	482	467	3	10	2
18-19	73	73	-	-	-	654	628	3	21	2
20	137	135	-	2	-	888	865	3	19	1
21	350	343	1	6	-	1 536	1 502	1	31	2
22	783	768	-	12	3	2 392	2 355	1	25	11
23	1 322	1 308	1	9	4	3 337	3 290	1	28	18
24	1 894	1 871	1	16	6	4 482	4 427	1	33	21
20-24	4 486	4 425	3	45	13	12 635	12 439	7	136	53
25	2 893	2 868	1	16	8	5 666	5 571	6	36	53
26	3 817	3 776	-	21	20	6 588	6 480	9	33	66
27	4 569	4 507	1	22	39	7 000	6 834	9	32	125
28	5 043	4 965	3	22	53	6 875	6 694	15	27	139
29	5 310	5 219	3	19	69	7 050	6 799	17	19	215
25-29	21 632	21 335	8	100	189	33 179	32 378	56	147	598
30	5 577	5 440	8	19	110	6 627	6 344	21	12	250
31	5 501	5 322	10	14	155	6 212	5 856	31	21	304
32	5 618	5 388	11	17	202	6 179	5 726	37	14	402
33	5 728	5 441	23	12	252	5 956	5 485	33	8	430
34	5 567	5 188	25	3	351	5 439	4 923	56	17	443
30-34	27 991	26 779	77	65	1 070	30 413	28 334	178	72	1 829

Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2018 (continued)

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
35	5 779	5 335	28	13	403	5 056	4 551	44	10	451
36	5 386	4 899	31	6	450	4 808	4 217	73	9	509
37	4 693	4 180	42	2	469	4 146	3 568	69	6	503
38	4 648	4 126	56	8	458	3 835	3 259	68	5	503
39	4 314	3 744	49	4	517	3 493	2 902	72	1	518
35-39	24 820	22 284	206	33	2 297	21 338	18 497	326	31	2 484
40	3 907	3 311	67	4	525	3 024	2 411	76	2	535
41	3 810	3 147	61	-	602	2 786	2 207	99	2	478
42	3 623	2 890	87	4	642	2 641	2 045	85	2	509
43	3 609	2 828	107	1	673	2 480	1 888	86	3	503
44	3 281	2 470	123	1	687	2 270	1 623	87	-	560
40-44	18 230	14 646	445	10	3 129	13 201	10 174	433	9	2 585
45	3 009	2 189	103	1	716	2 056	1 397	109	1	549
46	2 853	1 980	138	-	735	1 976	1 352	108	-	516
47	2 290	1 483	130	-	677	1 585	998	106	-	481
48	2 466	1 536	173	2	755	1 617	1 042	118	-	457
49	2 128	1 277	151	7	693	1 426	881	108	1	436
45-49	12 746	8 465	695	10	3 576	8 660	5 670	549	2	2 439
50	2 141	1 262	153	18	708	1 381	809	117	1	454
51	1 637	882	142	22	591	1 054	620	88	7	339
52	1 683	843	175	38	627	989	554	85	6	344
53	1 546	798	164	27	557	867	476	77	11	303
54	1 420	710	159	48	503	851	456	85	20	290
50-54	8 427	4 495	793	153	2 986	5 142	2 915	452	45	1 730

Table 5 – Number of marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides and marital status at the time of marriage, 2018 (concluded)

Age	Bridegrooms					Brides				
	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widower	Unspecified	Total	Never Married	Divorcee	Widow	Unspecified
55	1 370	628	168	64	510	777	438	88	23	228
56	1 230	537	173	43	477	690	358	95	25	212
57	963	372	154	40	397	544	257	69	17	201
58	1 016	419	153	38	406	526	260	64	24	178
59	887	340	155	43	349	469	216	82	27	144
55-59	5 466	2 296	803	228	2 139	3 006	1 529	398	116	963
60	967	400	178	50	339	495	260	89	20	126
61	784	334	145	40	265	385	162	73	27	123
62	690	277	149	36	228	317	151	75	14	77
63	620	254	138	35	193	262	105	55	12	90
64	607	232	142	28	205	229	102	48	13	66
60-64	3 668	1 497	752	189	1 230	1 688	780	340	86	482
65	520	205	127	37	151	196	78	48	8	62
66	509	225	118	31	135	187	84	52	12	39
67	326	116	108	15	87	119	42	37	5	35
68	340	147	103	13	77	142	67	37	8	30
69	294	118	86	20	70	109	37	34	10	28
65-69	1 989	811	542	116	520	753	308	208	43	194
70+	1 707	638	625	79	365	518	228	159	26	105
Unspecified	3	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 6 – Number of registered customary marriages in South Africa, 2009 – 2018

Year of registration	Number of marriages
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
2018	3 160

Table 7 – Number and percentage distribution of customary marriages by province of marriage registration and age difference, 2018

Province of registration	Number					%				
	Total	Bridegroom older	Bridegroom younger	Same age	Unspecified	Total	Bridegroom older	Bridegroom younger	Same age	Unspecified
Total	3 160	2 720	267	167	6	100,0	86,1	8,4	5,3	0,2
Western Cape	12	12	-	-	-	100,0	100,0	-	-	-
Eastern Cape	283	263	12	7	1	100,0	92,9	4,2	2,5	0,4
Northern Cape	52	44	8	-	-	100,0	84,6	15,4	-	-
Free State	39	28	9	2	-	100,0	71,8	23,1	5,1	-
KwaZulu-Natal	1 495	1 256	130	108	1	100,0	84,0	8,7	7,2	0,1
North West	68	56	7	5	-	100,0	82,4	10,3	7,4	-
Gauteng	207	173	23	11	-	100,0	83,6	11,1	5,3	-
Mpumalanga	255	217	26	12	-	100,0	85,1	10,2	4,7	-
Limpopo	676	610	45	19	2	100,0	90,2	6,7	2,8	0,3
Outside RSA	11	9	2	-	-	100,0	81,8	18,2	-	-
Unknown	53	44	5	3	1	100,0	83,0	9,4	5,7	1,9
Unspecified	9	8	-	-	1	100,0	88,9	-	-	11,1

Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2018

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
Total	3 160	3 160
<18	7	139
18	6	90
19	18	109
18-19	24	199
20	28	121
21	52	117
22	70	120
23	82	129
24	94	125
20-24	326	612
25	99	142
26	102	148
27	120	128
28	125	125
29	136	127
25-29	582	670
30	111	126
31	130	105
32	114	91
33	107	107
34	98	113
30-34	560	542

Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2018 (continued)

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
35	107	87
36	103	78
37	115	82
38	87	72
39	114	68
35-39	526	387
40	93	54
41	78	56
42	74	64
43	63	55
44	65	38
40-44	373	267
45	67	42
46	52	38
47	53	29
48	54	23
49	43	20
45-49	269	152
50	48	14
51	34	20
52	36	21
53	50	19
54	27	12
50-54	195	86

Table 8 – Number of customary marriages by ages of bridegrooms and brides at the time of marriage, 2018 (concluded)

Age	Bridegrooms	Brides
55	20	13
56	20	14
57	37	7
58	22	11
59	10	8
55-59	109	53
60	35	8
61	18	6
62	15	3
63	19	3
64	14	6
60-64	101	26
65	9	3
66	9	7
67	5	2
68	9	2
69	8	1
65-69	40	15
70+	42	6
Unspecified	6	6

Table 9 – Number and percentage distribution of civil unions registered by province of registration, 2014 – 2018

Province of registration	Number					%				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Grand Total	1 144	1 185	1 331	1 357	1 650	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Western Cape	314	346	358	391	465	27,5	29,2	26,9	28,8	28,2
Eastern Cape	54	49	57	57	58	4,7	4,1	4,3	4,2	3,5
Northern Cape	81	10	15	16	20	7,1	0,8	1,1	1,2	1,2
Free State	32	41	36	42	46	2,8	3,5	2,7	3,1	2,8
KwaZulu-Natal	161	220	249	245	298	14,1	18,6	18,7	18,1	18,1
North West	28	25	29	43	40	2,5	2,1	2,2	3,2	2,4
Gauteng	452	443	494	507	632	39,5	37,4	37,1	37,4	38,3
Mpumalanga	9	24	22	32	31	0,8	2,0	1,7	2,4	1,9
Limpopo	10	16	17	15	13	0,9	1,4	1,3	1,1	0,8
Outside RSA	3	4	4	3	2	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,2	0,1
Unspecified	-	7	50	6	45	-	0,6	3,8	0,4	2,7

Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2018

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
Total	1 650	1 650
18	-	2
19	2	2
18-19	2	4
20	1	3
21	9	15
22	9	14
23	12	25
24	22	49
20-24	53	106
25	39	52
26	42	51
27	52	73
28	55	84
29	82	97
25-29	270	357
30	80	90
31	91	72
32	90	87
33	85	78
34	73	77
30-34	419	404

Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2018 (continued)

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
35	63	58
36	72	58
37	66	59
38	53	44
39	53	47
35-39	307	266
40	43	46
41	46	47
42	25	40
43	36	20
44	41	18
40-44	191	171
45	23	33
46	38	37
47	37	26
48	24	22
49	32	22
45-49	154	140
50	25	37
51	9	12
52	17	19
53	20	19
54	25	15
50-54	96	102

Table 10 – Number of civil unions by ages of spouses-1 and spouses-2 at the time of civil union, 2018 (concluded)

Age	Spouse-1	Spouse-2
55	18	15
56	19	15
57	15	5
58	12	5
59	9	8
55-59	73	48
60	15	7
61	9	7
62	9	7
63	3	3
64	7	5
60-64	43	29
65	6	3
66	1	3
67	3	6
68	7	1
69	2	2
65-69	19	15
70+	23	8

Table 11 – Number and percentage distribution of published divorces in South Africa by population group, 2009 – 2018

Year	Total	Numbers						%						
		Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Mixed	Unspecified
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	11,0
2013	23 885	8 656	3 888	1 425	7 561	24	2 331	100,0	36,2	16,3	6,0	31,7	0,1	9,8
2014	24 689	9 167	4 994	1 522	6 970	842	1 194	100,0	37,1	20,2	6,2	28,2	3,4	4,8
2015	25 260	10 841	4 213	1 566	6 588	837	1 215	100,0	42,9	16,7	6,2	26,1	3,3	4,8
2016	25 326	10 641	4 711	1 529	6 293	841	1 311	100,0	42,0	18,6	6,0	24,8	3,3	5,2
2017	25 390	11 309	4 517	1 401	6 048	833	1 282	100,0	44,5	17,8	5,5	23,8	3,3	5,0
2018	25 284	11 721	4 540	1 214	5 780	779	1 250	100,0	46,4	18,0	4,8	22,9	3,1	4,9

Table 12 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by type of occupation at the time of divorce, 2018

Occupation	Number		%	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Grand total	25 284	25 284	100,0	100,0
Professionals, semi-professionals and technical occupations	3 113	3 761	12,3	14,9
Managers and administrators	3 435	1 974	13,6	7,8
Clerical and sales occupations	1 455	2 986	5,8	11,8
Transport delivery and communications	989	72	3,9	0,3
Services occupations	2 413	2 106	9,5	8,3
Farming and related occupations	133	35	0,5	0,1
Artisans apprentice and related occupations	1 597	229	6,3	0,9
Production foreman mine and quarry worker	786	326	3,1	1,3
Not economically active	4 728	6 291	18,7	24,9
Unspecified	6 635	7 504	26,2	29,7

Table 13 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and plaintiff, 2018

Population group	Number					%				
	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified
Grand Total	25 284	8 791	13 218	1 523	1 752	100,0	34,8	52,3	6,0	6,9
Black African	11 721	4 370	5 556	989	806	100,0	37,3	47,4	8,4	6,9
Coloured	4 540	1 374	2 605	223	338	100,0	30,3	57,4	4,9	7,4
Indian/Asian	1 214	442	661	41	70	100,0	36,4	54,4	3,4	5,8
White	5 780	1 958	3 336	196	290	100,0	33,9	57,7	3,4	5,0
Mixed	779	217	452	47	63	100,0	27,9	58,0	6,0	8,1
Unspecified	1 250	430	608	27	185	100,0	34,4	48,6	2,2	14,8

Table 14 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by province of divorce registration and plaintiff, 2018

Province of divorce registration	Number					%				
	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified	Total	Husbands	Wives	Both	Unspecified
Grand Total	25 284	8 791	13 218	1 523	1 752	100,0	34,8	52,3	6,0	6,9
Western Cape	6 274	2 061	3 523	254	436	100,0	32,8	56,2	4,0	6,9
Eastern Cape	3 325	1 089	1 610	465	161	100,0	32,8	48,4	14,0	4,8
Northern Cape	370	136	220	4	10	100,0	36,8	59,5	1,1	2,7
Free State	2 457	987	1 326	41	103	100,0	40,2	54,0	1,7	4,2
KwaZulu-Natal	3 868	1 426	1 952	191	299	100,0	36,9	50,5	4,9	7,7
North West	483	183	241	14	45	100,0	37,9	49,9	2,9	9,3
Gauteng	6 623	2 151	3 435	418	619	100,0	32,5	51,9	6,3	9,3
Mpumalanga	677	250	345	52	30	100,0	36,9	51,0	7,7	4,4
Limpopo	1 207	508	566	84	49	100,0	42,1	46,9	7,0	4,1

Table 15 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and way of solemnisation of the marriage, 2018

Population group	Number				%			
	Total	Religious	DHA	Unspecified	Total	Religious	DHA	Unspecified
Total	25 284	11 535	11 543	2 206	100,0	45,6	45,7	8,7
Black African	11 721	3 354	7 834	533	100,0	28,6	66,8	4,5
Coloured	4 540	3 043	1 115	382	100,0	67,0	24,6	8,4
Indian/Asian	1 214	398	673	143	100,0	32,8	55,4	11,8
White	5 780	4 008	1 035	737	100,0	69,3	17,9	12,8
Mixed	779	266	425	88	100,0	34,1	54,6	11,3
Unspecified	1 250	466	461	323	100,0	37,3	36,9	25,8

Table 16 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by number of times married at the time of divorce, 2018

Number of times married	Number		%	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Total	25 284	25 284	100,0	100,0
Once	20 997	21 329	83,0	84,4
Twice	2 988	2 570	11,8	10,2
Three or more	411	287	1,6	1,1
Unspecified	888	1 098	3,5	4,3

Table 17 – Number of divorces by age and population group (male divorcees), 2018

Age group	Population group						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other	Unspecified
Total	25 284	12 073	4 801	1 409	5 999	92	910
<25	68	12	20	8	26	-	2
25-29	846	190	238	75	319	1	23
30-34	2 547	931	601	209	717	5	84
35-39	4 273	2 042	890	260	933	12	136
40-44	4 551	2 386	848	265	885	11	156
45-49	4 456	2 271	824	221	989	9	142
50-54	3 527	1 833	664	163	739	7	121
55-59	2 089	1 042	334	70	565	1	77
60-64	1 210	588	175	44	339	1	63
65-69	603	269	92	13	205	1	23
70-74	244	102	38	5	90	-	9
75-79	101	44	10	2	37	-	8
80+	55	32	3	-	18	-	2
Unspecified	714	331	64	74	137	44	64

Table 18 – Number of divorces by age group and population group (female divorcees), 2018

Age group	Population group						
	Total	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other	Unspecified
Total	25 284	12 013	4 969	1 318	5 912	9	1 063
<25	292	81	57	22	126	-	6
25-29	1 867	717	399	137	553	-	61
30-34	3 993	1 964	788	229	858	-	154
35-39	5 024	2 690	938	248	961	1	186
40-44	4 697	2 469	899	231	940	1	157
45-49	3 881	1 829	822	201	875	1	153
50-54	2 468	1 072	527	116	635	1	117
55-59	1 333	543	271	53	403	-	63
60-64	680	260	114	27	240	-	39
65-69	263	86	45	6	116	1	9
70-74	99	28	22	2	40	-	7
75-79	28	8	5	-	14	-	1
80+	16	5	2	-	9	-	-
Unspecified	643	261	80	46	142	4	110

Table 19 – Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (male divorcees), 2018

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	25 284	4 296	6 908	5 259	3 256	2 333	1 332	629	541	730
<25	68	56	6	-	-	1	-	-	-	5
25-29	846	559	256	5	-	-	2	-	-	24
30-34	2 547	999	1 232	230	10	1	1	5	-	69
35-39	4 273	885	1 943	1 168	172	2	1	4	4	94
40-44	4 551	603	1 356	1 480	792	190	8	3	5	114
45-49	4 456	408	850	1 084	1 031	731	197	8	9	138
50-54	3 527	286	516	574	642	715	541	133	11	109
55-59	2 089	152	255	268	303	397	307	254	90	63
60-64	1 210	111	141	151	134	154	139	143	196	41
65-69	603	64	77	74	61	61	71	41	137	17
70-74	244	27	32	24	25	26	26	14	56	14
75-79	101	10	12	17	14	13	9	6	18	2
80+	55	8	8	13	4	9	1	6	4	2
Unspecified	714	128	224	171	68	33	29	12	11	38

Table 20 – Number of divorces by age group and duration of marriage (female divorcees), 2018

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	25 284	4 296	6 908	5 259	3 256	2 333	1 332	629	541	730
<25	292	240	39	1	1	1	-	-	-	10
25-29	1 867	968	780	56	1	-	5	-	-	57
30-34	3 993	1 067	2 036	744	36	2	-	10	1	97
35-39	5 024	717	1 827	1 752	562	34	1		10	121
40-44	4 697	486	991	1 335	1 183	523	41	2	4	132
45-49	3 881	330	542	679	809	921	436	38	11	115
50-54	2 468	177	258	327	343	497	513	256	28	69
55-59	1 333	101	154	151	158	171	192	202	159	45
60-64	680	59	61	73	51	85	73	81	185	12
65-69	263	23	25	14	32	34	20	19	86	10
70-74	99	9	8	9	7	11	11	7	34	3
75-79	28	5	2	4	-	4	4	1	6	2
80+	16	4	3	2	4	1	-	-	1	1
Unspecified	643	110	182	112	69	49	36	13	16	56

Table 21 – Number and percentage distribution of divorces by population group and divorces with and without children (aged below 18 years), 2018

Population group	Total	Divorces with children	Divorces without children	Total	Divorces with children	Divorces without children
Total	25 284	14 302	10 982	100,0	56,6	43,4
Black African	11 721	7 182	4 539	100,0	61,3	38,7
Coloured	4 540	2 747	1 793	100,0	60,5	39,5
Indian/Asian	1 214	663	551	100,0	54,6	45,4
White	5 780	2 644	3 136	100,0	45,7	54,3
Mixed	779	422	357	100,0	54,2	45,8
Unspecified	1 250	644	606	100,0	51,5	48,5

Table 22 – Number and percentage distribution of population group by children (aged below 18 years) affected by divorces, 2018

Population group	Total number of children involved	%
Total	23 727	100,0
Black African	12 005	50,6
Coloured	4 721	19,9
Indian/Asian	989	4,2
White	4 229	17,8
Mixed	689	2,9
Unspecified	1 094	4,6

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 2018. 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 2019.

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 2018 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 2018, Stats SA received and processed 25 284 divorce forms.

4. Limitations

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

5. Definitions of terms

Civil marriages: these are marriages registered according to the Marriage Act, 1961 (Act No. 25 of 1961). In the release, the term 'civil' is used to differentiate marriages that were solemnised by licensed DHA marriage officers and those that were solemnised by religious marriage officers.

Customary marriages: these are marriages that are negotiated, celebrated or concluded according to any of the systems of indigenous African customary law which exists in South Africa as prescribed in the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, 1998 (Act No. 120 of 1998).

Civil unions: refers to the voluntary union of two persons who are both 18 years of age or older, which is solemnised and registered by way of either a marriage or a civil partnership, in accordance with the procedures prescribed in the Civil Union Act, 2006 (Act No. 17 of 2006). Spouse-1 and Spouse-2 are used because the data does not specify the sex of the spouse.

Mixed population group: refers to couples with different population groups.

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

Plaintiff: spouse(s) who filed the divorce case.

Unknown province of registration: the information about the name of placename is not known, as the province is derived from the provided placename.

Unspecified province of registration: the information about the name of the placename is not specified (missing), as the province is derived from the provided placename.

6. Symbols

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

7. Reference

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GENERAL INFORMATION

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