

1 December 2008

CORRECTION

News release: “Divorce rate lowest for 26 years”

A production error in Table 3 of the Divorce 2007 News Release has been corrected. Numbers of divorces shown by age group within the table were correct. However, divorce rates by age group for 1997 to 2004 were produced using incorrect estimates of the marital status of the population. A corrected version of the table is available on the ONS website:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=14124>

As a result of this correction, the fourth paragraph of the press notice has been amended and now reads:

‘For the fifth consecutive year both men and women in their late twenties had the highest divorce rates of all five-year age groups’

A corrected version of the press notice can be found below.

ONS apologises for any inconvenience caused.

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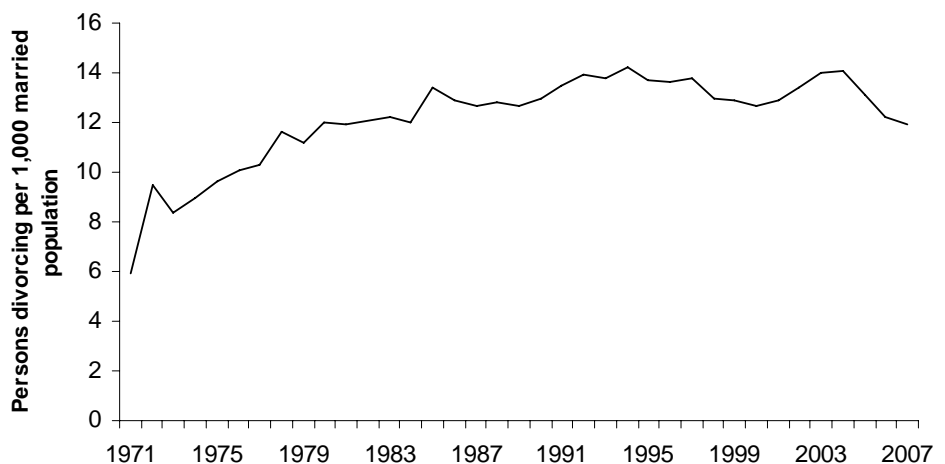


Divorce rate lowest for 26 years

The provisional divorce rate in England and Wales fell for a third consecutive year, reaching its lowest level since 1981, according to new statistics on divorces in 2007 released today by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The divorce rate fell to 11.9 divorces per thousand married men and women compared with the 2006 figure of 12.2.

Divorce rate in England and Wales, 1971 - 2007



Compared with 2006, divorce rates in England and Wales for both men and women fell across most age groups. However, rates increased for men and women aged 60 and over, and also for women aged between 45 and 49.

For the fifth consecutive year both men and women in their late twenties had the highest divorce rates of all five-year age groups. In 2007 there were 26.6 divorces per 1,000 married men aged 25-29 and 26.9 divorces per 1,000 married women aged 25-29.

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The provisional number of divorces in England and Wales fell for the fourth year in succession to 128,534 in 2007, a drop of 3.0 per cent compared with 132,562 in 2006. This is the lowest number since 1976 when there were 126,694 divorces.

The average (median) duration of marriage for divorces granted in 2007 increased to 11.7 years compared with the 2006 level of 11.6 years.

One in five men and women divorcing in 2007 had a previous marriage ending in divorce. This proportion has doubled in 27 years: in 1980 one in ten men and women divorcing had a previous marriage ending in divorce.

Of those divorces granted to a sole party in 2007, 68 per cent of divorces were granted to wives and in 54 per cent of these cases the husband's behaviour was the fact proven. For 33 per cent of divorces granted to the husband the fact proven was the wife's behaviour.

Over half (51 per cent) of couples divorcing in 2007 had at least one child aged under 16. There were 117,193 children aged under 16 who were in families where the parents divorced in 2007. Twenty per cent of these children were under five and 63 per cent were under eleven. These are the same percentages that were observed in 2006.

There was a similar increase in the average (mean) age at divorce for both men and women in 2007. For women it increased from 40.9 years in 2006 to 41.2 in 2007, for men the increase was from 43.4 years in 2006 to 43.7 in 2007.

The provisional number of divorces in the United Kingdom fell by 2.6 per cent in 2007 to 144,220 compared with 148,141 in 2006.

The provisional number of divorces in Scotland fell by 1.9 per cent from 13,014 in 2006 to 12,773 in 2007. However, the provisional number of divorces in Northern Ireland increased. In 2007, there were 2,913 divorces, 14 per cent more than in 2006 when there were 2,565.

There were 42 civil partnership dissolutions granted in the UK in 2007, of which 14 were to male couples and 28 to female couples.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. More data on divorces in England and Wales in 2007 are available on the National Statistics website:
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=14124>
2. More information on divorces in the UK (including data for Scotland and Northern Ireland) is available on the National Statistics website:
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=170>
3. A marriage may be either **dissolved**, following a petition for divorce and the granting of a decree absolute, or **annulled**, following a petition for nullity and the awarding of a decree of nullity. In this release the term divorce includes both decrees absolute and decrees of nullity.
4. The Divorce Reform Act 1969 came into effect in England and Wales on 1 January 1971. The Act, subsequently consolidated in the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, made it possible for the first time for divorce to be petitioned for on the couple's separation.
5. All divorce rates for 2007 are provisional as they were produced using the 2006 mid-year marital status estimates. These estimates are the latest available and were published on 29 November 2007. The 2007 marital status estimates will be available in November 2008.
6. The average (mean) ages presented in this news release have not been standardised for age and therefore do not take account of the changing age structure of the population.
7. The average duration of marriage at divorce in this news release is represented by the median. The median is the middle value when the data are arranged in increasing order.
8. Children of the family are those as defined by the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 (Section 52). As well as children born to the divorcing couple, this includes children born outside marriage, children of previous marriages, and adopted children, provided that they were treated by both partners as children of the family. The analysis of children's age takes place at time of petition, not at divorce.
9. The Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006 came into effect on 4 May 2006. The Act reduced the separation periods for divorce with consent to one year

(previously two years) and without consent to two years (previously five years). It also removed 'desertion' as a ground for divorce.

10. Further summary statistics on divorces in England and Wales in 2007 will be published in *Population Trends* 129 on 25 September 2007. Full details of divorces in 2007 are expected to be published in 2009.
11. A civil partnership may be either dissolved by the presentation of an application and granting of a final order or annulled following the presentation of an application and the granting of a final order of nullity. To obtain a civil partnership dissolution in the UK, a couple must have been in either a registered civil partnership or recognised equivalent foreign relationship for 12 months.
12. Full details of divorces in 2006 are due to be published in the annual reference volume *Marriage, divorce and adoption statistics* (Series FM2 no. 34). Publication is planned for spring 2009.
13. Full details of divorces in 2007 are due to be published in the annual reference volume *Marriage, divorce and adoption statistics* (Series FM2 no. 35). Publication is planned for spring 2010.
14. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
15. **National Statistics** are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2008.