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## Royal couple are one in ten on diamond wedding anniversary

The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh celebrate their diamond wedding anniversary on Tuesday 20 November.

In reaching the 60-year landmark, their Majesties join a select group. More than 401,000 couples married in England and Wales in 1947 but, according to Office for National Statistics estimates, just one in ten of these couples will celebrate their diamond anniversary this year. Around one in ten marriages from 1947 ended in divorce, with the remainder ending due to bereavement.

The six decades since the royal wedding have seen considerable change in the nation's marriage habits. Not only are there fewer marriages – provisional figures show 244,710 in 2005 – but the profile of a newlywed is also markedly different.

In 1947, the vast majority of men and women (85 and 86 per cent respectively) were getting married for the first time and just 7 per cent were divorcees. However by 2005, the proportions of men and women marrying for the first time were 70 and 71 per cent respectively, and 27 per cent of those getting married were divorcees.

The age at which couples marry for the first time has also risen. In 1947 the median age at marriage was 26 for single men and 23 for single women. After falling in the 1960s, by 2005 this had risen to 30 and 28 respectively.

How many of today's married couples will celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in years to come? Falling mortality rates suggest that more couples will live long enough to reach their anniversary, but higher divorce rates suggest that fewer will be together by the 60<sup>th</sup> year. Overall, ONS estimates suggest that given current divorce and mortality rates the proportion of couples likely to mark their diamond wedding anniversary in the future is likely to be similar to those that married in 1947.

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### Then and now: 60 years of change

1947		Now*
43,050,000	<b>Population</b>	53,728,800
881,026	<b>Births</b>	669,601
5.3 per cent	<i>Outside marriage</i>	43.5 per cent
515,591	<b>Deaths</b>	502,599
401,210	<b>Marriages</b>	244,710 <sup>P</sup>
	<b>Life expectancy at birth</b>	
63.9 years	<i>Males</i>	76.9 years
68.5 years	<i>Females</i>	81.1 years
60,254	<b>Divorces</b>	132,562 <sup>P</sup>
	<b>Prices (UK)</b>	
2p	<i>Pint of milk</i>	39p
2p	<i>Loaf of bread</i>	90p (white sliced 800g)

\* Most recent figures available, mainly 2005 or 2006. Figures shown are for England and Wales unless otherwise stated. Provisional

Demographic statistics in 1947 were greatly affected by the aftermath of the Second World War. The figure for divorces in 1947 is exceptionally high compared with surrounding years. In 1946 there were 29,829 divorces and 43,698 in 1948. The subsequent decade saw around 30,000 divorces a year. Similarly the number of births in 1947 was exceptionally high and represents a post war peak in births. The 1950s saw an average of a little under 700,000 births a year. Marriages also showed a peak in the immediate post war years.

### BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The calculation of marriages surviving from 1947 uses only events data (marriages, divorces and deaths) recorded in England and Wales. It takes no account of the migration of couples marrying in 1947 and will include deaths or divorces that occur in England and Wales to immigrating couples who married in 1947 outside England and Wales. An estimate has been made of divorce and mortality beyond the years when actual data are available to estimate marriage survival to 2007.

2. The statement on the marriage survival for existing married couples is based on recent divorce and death rates data from 2004 and estimation of the married population by length of marriage. The estimate groups together all generations and assumes that existing divorce and death rates continue unchanged into the future. The figures purely reflect the level of divorce and mortality rates in 2004 and no account is taken of projected improvements in mortality. (Also more recent data on divorces has shown a fall in numbers and rates.) An article on marriage survival is planned for next year *in Population Trends*, published by ONS.
3. The registration of life events (births, deaths and marriages) is a service carried out by the Local Registration Service in partnership with the General Register Office (GRO) in Southport, which is part of ONS. The latest data on marriages is available on the National Statistics website at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=322>
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