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Coverage

England and Wales

Theme

Population and Migration

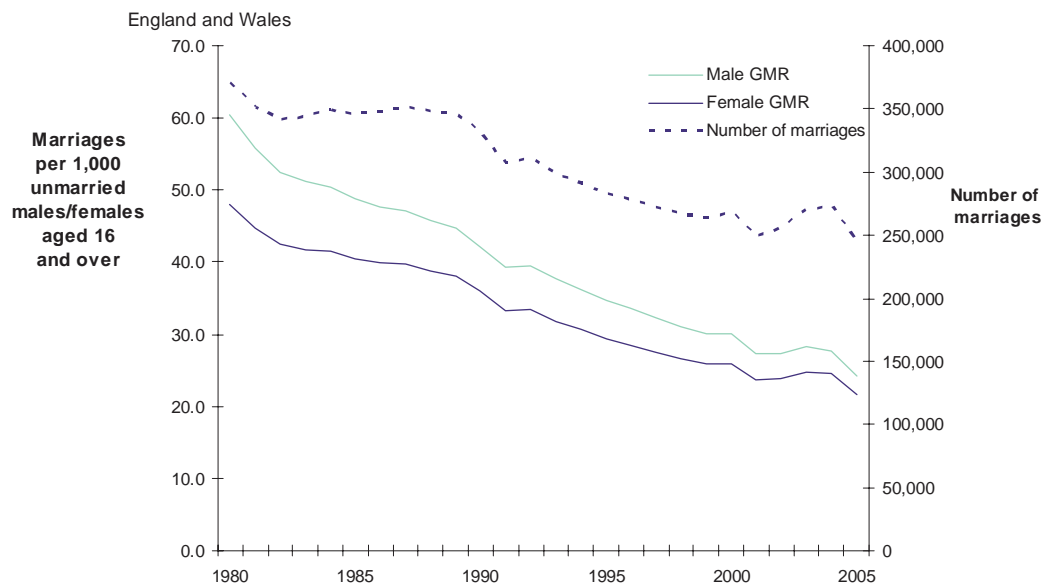
Marriage rates fall to lowest on record

Marriage rates in England and Wales have fallen to the lowest level since records began, according to provisional figures for 2005 released today by the Office for National Statistics.

The number of unmarried adults rose in 2005, but the number who chose to marry fell, producing the lowest marriage rates since they were first calculated in 1862. The number of marriages fell by 10 per cent in 2005 to its lowest level since 1896. This fall follows a three-year rise that interrupted a trend of long-term decline.

There was a change in law from 1 February 2005, which was designed to discourage 'sham marriages' (see background note 5). This is one of many factors that may have contributed to the drop in the number of marriages in 2005.

Marriages and General Marriage Rate (GMR) for males and females



In 2005 the marriage rate for men was 24.2 men marrying per 1,000 unmarried men aged 16 and over, down from 27.8 in 2004. The marriage rate for women in 2005 was 21.6 women marrying per 1,000 unmarried women aged 16 and over, down from 24.6 in 2004.

More data on 2005 marriages are available on the National Statistics website: www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=14275

Issued by
National Statistics
1 Drummond Gate
London SW1V 2QQ

Telephone
Press Office 020 7533 5702
Email press.office@ons.gov.uk
Public Enquiries 0845 601 3034

Statistician
Louise Mackarness 01329 813772
Email louise.mackarness@ons.gov.uk

Internet
www.statistics.gov.uk

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There were 244,710 marriages in England and Wales in 2005, down from 273,070 in 2004. This is the lowest annual number of marriages since 1896 when there were 242,764.

Other statistics for 2005 show that:

- The number of civil marriage ceremonies fell 13 per cent from 2004, from 184,910 to 160,270. Civil ceremonies represented 65 per cent of all ceremonies in 2005, down from 68 per cent in 2004. This reverses a 15-year increase in the proportion of civil marriages from 1990 when 47 per cent of all marriages were conducted in a civil ceremony.
- The number of ceremonies taking place in approved premises has continued to increase. Just over 88,700 marriages took place in approved premises in 2005 accounting for 36 per cent of all marriages and 55 per cent of civil marriages. In 2004, 31 per cent of marriages took place in approved premises; in 1996 this proportion was 5 per cent.
- Marriages that were the first for both parties in 2005 accounted for 60 per cent of all marriages and remarriages accounted for 19 per cent, similar proportions to 2004. In 2005 religious marriages accounted for 46 per cent of marriages that were the first for both parties, compared with 42 per cent in 2004. For religious marriages that were remarriages for both parties the proportion was 14 per cent, the same in both 2004 and 2005.
- In the 10 years since 1995, the average age at marriage has increased by just over three years for men and just under three years for women. In 2005 the mean age at marriage increased to 36.2 years for men and 33.6 years for women, compared with 2004 when the figures were 35.8 and 33.1 respectively.



BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The statistics on marriages presented here will also be published on 29 March 2007 as a Report in *Population Trends 127*. Final figures will be published in the annual reference volume *Marriage, Divorce and Adoption Statistics 2005* (Series FM2 No.33).
2. Full final figures for marriages in 2004 will be published in the annual reference volume *Marriage, Divorce and Adoption Statistics 2004* (Series FM2 No.32) on 29 March 2007. Final marriage figures are produced when complete returns have been received from all register offices and clergy. In 2004 final figures increased by approximately 2,400 records from the provisional first release of figures.
3. Marriage rates were first calculated in 1862. Rates from this year onwards are shown in Table 2b of the summary tables at the following link: www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=14275
4. These figures relate only to marriages solemnised in England and Wales. Marriages of England and Wales residents that take place outside England and Wales are not included in the figures.
5. Measures included in the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc) Act 2004 were introduced on 1 February 2005 to prevent 'sham marriages'. These measures required individuals who are non EEA nationals subject to immigration control to give notice of their marriage at one of 76 designated Register Offices. These restrictions do not apply to marriages by Registrar General's Licence or ecclesiastical preliminaries (banns or licence).
6. Approved premises are buildings such as hotels and stately homes licensed by local authorities under the Marriage Act 1994, for the solemnisation of civil marriages. In addition, some local authorities have made accommodation available for civil marriage as approved premises in place of register offices. This provision for marriages in approved premises came into effect on 1 April 1995.
7. The population estimates by marital status used to calculate rates in this release are the latest available. Mid-2005 estimates were published on 30 November 2006. Further information on population estimates can be found on the National Statistics website at www.statistics.gov.uk/popest. The rates for the period 1982 to 1990 will be revised when revisions are made to the population estimates by marital status following the revisions to the overall population estimates for that period after the 2001 Census.
8. The mean ages presented in this first release are not standardised and therefore take no account of the structure of the population by age or marital status.
9. Details of the policy governing the release of data are available from the press office.
10. 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 influence. ©Crown copyright 2007.