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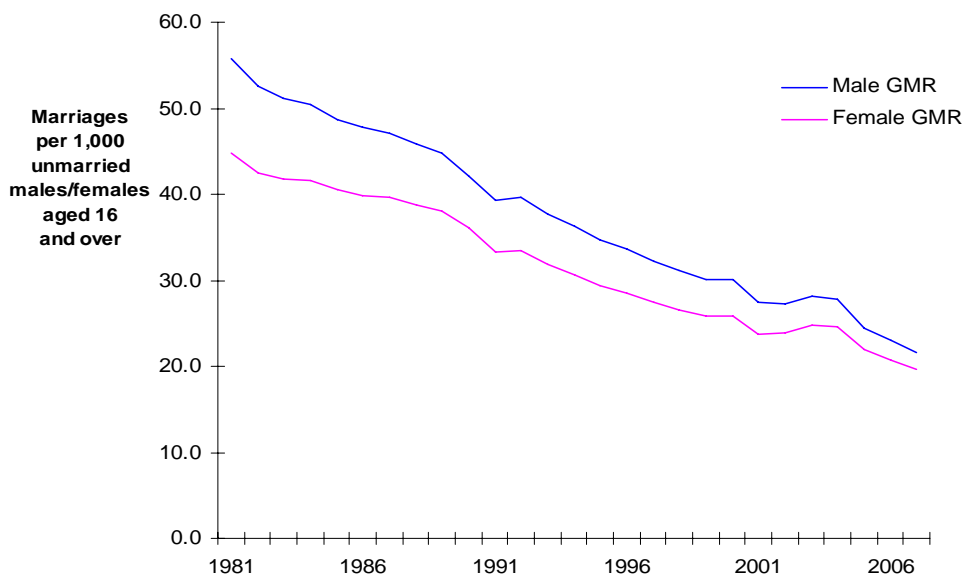
Marriage rates fall to lowest on record

Marriage rates in England and Wales have fallen to the lowest level since records began, according to provisional figures for 2007 released today by the Office for National Statistics.

The number of unmarried adults rose in 2007, but the number choosing to marry fell, producing the lowest marriage rates since they were first calculated in 1862. In 2007, there were 21.6 men marrying per 1,000 unmarried men aged 16 and over, down from 23.0 in 2006. The marriage rate for women in 2007 was 19.7 women marrying per 1,000 unmarried women aged 16 and over, down from 20.7 in 2006.

Marriages registered in England and Wales fell for the third consecutive year in 2007. The number of marriages fell by 3.3 per cent to 231,450 in 2007 compared with 2006 (239,450). With the exception of an increase between 2002 and 2004, this follows the declining long-term trend observed in recent decades and is the lowest annual number of marriages registered in England and Wales since 1895 when there were 228,204.

General Marriage Rate (GMR) for males and females, England and Wales, 1981 - 2007



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In 2007, 143,440 marriages were the first for both parties involved, accounting for 62 per cent of all marriages. Remarriages for both parties accounted for 18 per cent of all marriages. These proportions are similar to those observed in 2006. Since 1981, the number of marriages that were the first for both parties have fallen by 37 per cent, whilst remarriages for both parties have fallen by just over a quarter (28 per cent).

More data on 2007 marriages are available on the National Statistics website: www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=14275

Other statistics for 2007 show that:

- In 2007, the mean age at marriage for men was 36.4 years, the same as in 2006. The mean age at marriage for women in 2007 increased to 33.8 years from 33.7 years in 2006. Over the past ten years, the mean age at marriage has increased by around two and a half years.
- Since 1991, the mean age at first marriage has increased by just over four years for both men and women. In 2007, the mean age at first marriage increased to 31.9 years for men and 29.8 years for women, compared with 2006 when the figures were 31.8 and 29.7 respectively.
- In 2007, the number of civil ceremonies fell by 2.8 per cent compared with 2006, from 158,350 to 153,960. Civil ceremonies represented two-thirds (67 per cent) of all ceremonies in 2007.
- Since 1991, the number of marriages has fallen by a quarter, while the number of religious marriages has halved. In 2007, the number of religious ceremonies fell by 4.5 per cent to 77,490 compared with 2006.
- The number of marriage ceremonies which took place in approved premises such as hotels, stately homes and historic buildings increased in 2007. There were 99,760 marriage ceremonies performed in approved premises in 2007, a 4.2 per cent increase from 2006. Marriages in approved premises accounted for 43 per cent of all marriages in 2007 and two-thirds of all civil marriages. In 2006, 40 per cent of all marriages

took place in approved premises; in 1997, this proportion was 8.1 per cent.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The 2007 statistics on marriages presented here will also be published on 26 March 2009 as a report in *Population Trends 135*. Final figures will be published in the annual reference volume *Marriage, divorce and adoption Statistics 2007* (Series FM2 No.35) in spring 2010.
2. The 2006 figures on marriages presented here are rounded final figures. Full final unrounded figures for marriages in 2006 will be published in the annual reference volume *Marriage, divorce and adoption statistics 2006* (Series FM2 No.34) Final marriage figures are produced when returns have been received from register offices and clergy. For 2006 marriages, final figures increased by approximately 2,500 records during the period of eleven months, after the first release figures were published in February 2008.
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. The General Marriage Rate (GMR) is referred to in this news release. The GMR shows the number of men or women marrying per 1,000 unmarried men or women aged 16 or over. Therefore, the GMR takes account of changes in the size of the unmarried adult population in England and Wales as well as the number of marriages.
4. These figures relate only to marriages solemnised in England and Wales. Marriages of persons whose usual residence is in England and Wales, but take place outside England and Wales are not included in the figures. Marriages of persons whose usual residence is outside of England and Wales, but whose marriage takes place in England and Wales may be 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 the possibility of '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-2007 estimates were published on 19 November 2008. Further information on population estimates can be found on the National Statistics website at www.statistics.gov.uk/popest.

8. The mean ages presented in this first release are not standardised and therefore take no account of changing distributions by age and marital status within the male/female populations.
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 UK Statistics Authority's 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 2009.