

Marital status projections for England & Wales

Results of the Government Actuary's 1996-based population projections by marital status for England & Wales are released today. The projections cover both legal marital status and cohabitation. They assume some continuation of recent trends in marriage, divorce and cohabitation. In particular, that:

- Marriage rates at ages under 30 will continue to fall, although there will be some increase in rates at older ages.
- There will be a small further increase in divorce rates.
- The proportion of people who cohabit will rise for single (never-married) people, but will remain broadly constant for previously married people.

Key results of the projections include that:

- The proportion of the adult population who are married will fall from 55 per cent in 1996 to 45 per cent by 2021. (*Table 1*)
- The proportion of adults who have never married will rise from 32 per cent in 1996 to 41 per cent in 2021 for males, and from 24 per cent to 33 per cent for females. (*Table 1*)
- The recent steep fall in marriage rates at ages under 30 will, in time, have an impact at older ages. So, there will be marked falls in the married population, and increases in the never-married population, at ages 30 to 44 and, later on, at ages 45 to 64. (*Table 1*)
- The proportion of adults who are divorced will rise at ages over 45, but fall at younger ages. (*Table 1*)
- Mainly because of projected improvements in mortality, the proportion of people who are widowed will fall. The proportion aged 65 and over who are widowed will fall from 49 per cent in 1996 to 35 per cent in 2021 for females, and from 18 per cent to 13 per cent for males. (*Table 1*)
- Under the assumptions for these projections, the number of cohabiting couples, estimated to be 1.56 million in 1996, would almost double over the next twenty-five years. (*Table 2*)
- Some 60 per cent of male cohabitants in 1996 were aged over 30; this is projected to rise to 75 per cent by 2021. For females, the proportion is projected to increase from 49 per cent to 67 per cent. (*Table 2*)
- The net effect of the projected fall in marriage and rise in cohabitation is that the proportion of people living in couples will fall for most age groups, except for the elderly, over the next twenty-five years.

NEWS RELEASE

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Table 1 Population by age, sex and legal marital status, 1981-2021, England & Wales

	Males					Females				
	All statuses (millions = 100%)	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	All statuses (millions = 100%)	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced
<i>All adults</i>										
1981	18.6	27%	66%	4%	3%	20.2	20%	61%	15%	4%
1996	20.1	32%	56%	4%	8%	21.3	24%	54%	13%	9%
2001	20.6	35%	53%	3%	9%	21.6	27%	51%	13%	10%
2011	21.8	39%	48%	3%	10%	22.4	31%	47%	11%	11%
2021	22.5	41%	45%	3%	10%	23.1	33%	44%	10%	12%
<i>Ages 16-29</i>										
1981	5.3	70%	29%	0%	1%	5.1	56%	42%	0%	2%
1996	5.0	84%	15%	0%	1%	4.8	74%	24%	0%	3%
2001	4.7	90%	10%	0%	1%	4.5	82%	16%	0%	2%
2011	5.0	91%	8%	0%	1%	4.8	85%	14%	0%	1%
2021	4.8	91%	9%	0%	1%	4.6	84%	15%	0%	1%
<i>Ages 30-44</i>										
1981	4.9	13%	81%	0%	6%	4.8	7%	85%	1%	7%
1996	5.8	26%	62%	0%	11%	5.6	17%	69%	1%	13%
2001	6.2	34%	55%	0%	11%	6.0	23%	63%	1%	14%
2011	5.5	45%	45%	0%	9%	5.3	36%	52%	0%	12%
2021	5.3	50%	42%	0%	8%	5.2	41%	49%	0%	10%
<i>Ages 45-64</i>										
1981	5.4	9%	84%	3%	4%	5.6	7%	77%	11%	5%
1996	5.9	9%	78%	2%	11%	6.0	5%	75%	7%	13%
2001	6.2	10%	74%	2%	14%	6.3	6%	73%	6%	15%
2011	7.4	16%	65%	2%	17%	7.3	11%	66%	5%	19%
2021	7.7	25%	57%	1%	16%	7.4	18%	59%	4%	18%
<i>Ages 65+</i>										
1981	3.0	7%	73%	18%	2%	4.6	12%	37%	49%	2%
1996	3.4	7%	71%	18%	4%	4.9	8%	39%	49%	4%
2001	3.5	7%	71%	17%	5%	4.8	6%	40%	48%	6%
2011	3.9	7%	69%	15%	9%	5.0	5%	44%	41%	10%
2021	4.8	8%	66%	13%	13%	5.9	5%	45%	35%	14%

Table 2 Cohabiting population by age, sex and legal marital status, 1996-2021, England & Wales

	Males			Females		
	All statuses	Never married	Previously married*	All statuses	Never married	Previously married*
<i>All adults</i>						
1996	1.56	1.02	0.54	1.56	1.07	0.49
2001	2.00	1.42	0.58	2.00	1.48	0.52
2011	2.65	2.04	0.61	2.65	2.15	0.51
2021	2.93	2.34	0.58	2.93	2.46	0.46
<i>Ages 16-29</i>						
1996	0.63	0.59	0.04	0.80	0.74	0.05
2001	0.64	0.62	0.02	0.87	0.83	0.03
2011	0.74	0.72	0.02	1.00	0.97	0.03
2021	0.74	0.72	0.02	0.98	0.95	0.03
<i>Ages 30-44</i>						
1996	0.66	0.39	0.27	0.55	0.30	0.25
2001	0.94	0.66	0.28	0.80	0.54	0.27
2011	1.13	0.93	0.20	1.04	0.85	0.20
2021	1.16	0.99	0.17	1.11	0.95	0.16
<i>Ages 45+</i>						
1996	0.27	0.05	0.22	0.21	0.03	0.19
2001	0.42	0.14	0.28	0.33	0.11	0.22
2011	0.79	0.39	0.39	0.61	0.33	0.28
2021	1.03	0.64	0.39	0.83	0.57	0.27

* Divorced, separated or widowed

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The Government Actuary, in consultation with the Registrars General of England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, has responsibility for the production of national population projections, by age and sex, for the United Kingdom and constituent countries. A summary of the latest (1996-based) national projections was published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in *Population Trends 91* in March 1998. The Government Actuary also periodically produces marital status projections for England & Wales consistent with the national projections.
2. The marital status projections are based on the estimated population of England & Wales by marital status at mid-1996. Estimates of the population by legal marital status are prepared annually by ONS. Estimates of the population cohabiting in 1996 have been prepared specially by ONS for these projections.
3. The detailed results of the marital status projections are now available from the Government Actuary's Department. They will be discussed in *Population Trends 95* in March 1999.
4. The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) was created in 1919. As well as performing certain statutory duties, the Department provides a full actuarial consultancy service to ministers and Government departments, to many public sector bodies and to some overseas Governments, covering financial and statistical matters, including pensions, insurance, social security and demography.
5. The Government Actuary is Chris Daykin. He joined GAD in 1970 and qualified as a Fellow of the Institute of Actuaries in 1973. He worked in all major areas of GAD before being appointed GA in April 1989.
6. Enquiries about this News Release should be made to Chris Shaw on 0171 211 2662.
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