

Divorces and dissolutions in England and Wales QMI

Quality and methodology information for divorce and dissolution statistics, detailing the strengths and limitations of the data, methods used and data uses and users.

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1 . Output information

- Accredited official statistic: yes
- Survey name: Divorces and dissolutions in England and Wales
- Frequency: annual
- How compiled: based on third-party data
- Geographic coverage: England and Wales
- Last revised: 2 July 2025

2 . About this quality and methodology information (QMI) report

This quality and methodology information (QMI) report contains information on the quality characteristics of the data (including the European Statistical System five dimensions of quality) as well as the methods used to create it.

The information in this report will help you to:

- understand the strengths and limitations of the data
- learn about existing uses and users of the data
- understand the methods used to create the data
- help you to decide suitable uses for the data
- reduce the risk of misusing data

3 . Important points

- Divorce and civil partnership dissolution statistics are derived from information recorded by His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) during the legal process.
- The Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 came into effect on 6 April 2022; the Act introduced new mandatory waiting periods at important stages, allowing couples to end partnerships jointly, and couples can no longer state grounds (also known as Facts) for divorce or dissolution.
- [Annulments, as explained on GOV.UK](#), are where the marriage or civil partnership is either void (so no valid marriage or civil partnership ever existed) or voidable (it was legal at the time of registration but is no longer legal); there is no provision for annulments under the new legislation, so they are now recorded as old law cases from 2022 onwards.
- Marriages of same-sex couples first took place on 29 March 2014; the first divorces recorded between same-sex couples were in 2015.
- Dissolution statistics are available from 2007 for same-sex couples and from 2022 for opposite-sex couples.
- Divorce and dissolution statistics do not include married couples who separate but do not divorce.
- Divorce and dissolution cases where the marriage or civil partnership took place abroad are included, provided the marriage or civil partnership was legally recognised in England and Wales and one of the parties had a permanent home in England and Wales.

For the 2022 data release onwards, civil partnership dissolutions are reported at the same time as our divorce statistics (published separately in our [Civil partnerships dissolutions dataset](#)).

4 . Quality summary

Overview

Divorces and civil partnership dissolutions taking place in England and Wales are recorded by the courts in the HM Courts and Tribunals Service's (HMCTS) Core Case Data (CCD) management system. They are sent to us electronically for the production of statistics and analysis. Previously, information about divorces and dissolutions and their legal proceedings were recorded in the HMCTS FamilyMan case management system.

A number of cases, including annulments and old law cases (those initiated prior to the introduction of the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020), continue to be recorded within the FamilyMan case management system.

The [Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020](#) received Royal Assent on 25 June 2020 and came into effect on 6 April 2022. The Act revises the legal process in England and Wales for married couples to obtain a divorce or judicial separation, and for civil partners to dissolve their civil partnership or obtain a separation. The important changes to note are that:

- applicants can now make either a joint or sole application for divorce, civil partnership dissolution, or judicial separation; one or both parties (sole or joint applications) to a marriage may now apply to the court for a divorce order, which dissolves the marriage on the grounds that the marriage has broken down irretrievably
- people cannot state grounds (also known as Facts) for divorce, civil partnership dissolution, or separation
- applicants must now wait a minimum 20-week period from the start of proceedings until applying for the conditional order

We are responsible for publishing demographic statistics on [divorces and dissolutions](#) taking place in England and Wales. The statistics are published by sex, sole or joint applicant (previously known as a petitioner), duration of marriage to final order (or a decree absolute prior to April 2022), grounds for divorce (applicable to old-law divorce cases only) and to which partner granted the divorce or dissolution. Age at divorce or dissolution and marital status at time of legal partnership were published until the 2019 data year, and the number and ages of children involved were published up until the 2015 data year for divorces only.

From the 2020 data year, information about age and marital status is no longer collected during the legal process and since 2014, it has not been mandatory for couples divorcing to provide information on children, so we have discontinued these figures.

Our divorces and dissolutions data tables, which previously presented statistics by age and marital status, have been removed. However, the years 2007 to 2019 remain available through previous editions of our [Divorces in England and Wales dataset](#) and our [Civil partnership dissolutions in England and Wales dataset](#). Links to these tables can be found at the bottom of the contents page in both datasets. More information is available in [Section 5: Quality characteristics of the Divorces and dissolutions in England and Wales data](#).

Figures represent divorces, dissolutions and annulments that took place in England and Wales. A legal partnership is dissolved, following an application (or petition prior to April 2022) for divorce or dissolution and the granting of a final order (or decree absolute prior to April 2022). Alternatively, it is annulled, following an application for nullity and the awarding of a nullity of marriage order (or decree of nullity prior to April 2022). From 2022 onwards, all annulments are included under the old legislation only; there is no provision for annulments under the new law.

Since the 2014 data year, our annual divorces release includes a selection of [summary datasets](#). We also have a more detailed [explorable dataset](#) available. A statistical bulletin provides commentary on the main points. The summary datasets provide extensive time series for comparison.

The explorable dataset provides more detailed data on divorces of opposite-sex couples in England and Wales for 2009 onwards. Users can find figures about:

- grounds for divorce or separation, also known as Facts proven (available for old law cases only)
- length of marriage
- applicant(s) (known as petitioner prior to April 2022)
- age of each applicant at divorce (available until 2019 only)
- previous marital status of each party (available until 2019 only)
- whether the couple had children (available until 2014 only)

Prior to the 2014 data year, a series of more detailed [datasets](#) were published with an accompanying statistical bulletin presenting the latest year's figures and historical data where possible.

Following the implementation of the [Marriage \(Same Sex Couples\) Act 2013](#), the first marriages of same-sex couples took place on 29 March 2014. Civil partners have been able to convert their civil partnership into a marriage from 10 December 2014. Figures showing the number of divorces to same-sex couples have since been included in our annual divorce publications. The first divorces recorded between same-sex couples in England and Wales were in 2015.

Coverage of the [annual civil partnership statistical data](#) was altered from UK to England and Wales only from the 2014 data year onwards. This alteration came after respondents to our [civil partnership consultation](#) almost unanimously supported the proposal for changing coverage to allow for more timely civil partnership statistics for England and Wales.

Summary figures for the UK are published in our [Vital statistics in the UK: births, deaths and marriages dataset](#).

Divorce statistics on case progression are available from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in [Family Court Statistics Quarterly](#). HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) also publish the latest [monthly management information](#) on workload, timeliness and performance against new processing targets for HMCTS divorce cases.

Annual divorce statistics for the UK and its constituent countries are published in the [Vital statistics in the UK: births, deaths and marriages](#) publication.

Divorce statistics for 2007 and earlier years were published in the annual reference volume [Series FM2](#); the final volume of FM2 was produced in March 2010.

Our [User guide to divorce statistics](#) provides further information on data quality, legislation and procedures relating to divorces.

Uses and users of Divorces and dissolutions in England and Wales data

Divorce and dissolution statistics are used widely to inform policy development. For example:

- the [Department for Work and Pensions \(DWP\)](#) uses civil partnership, marriage, and divorce data in dynamic simulation models covering pension-age populations to model pensioner incomes, as well as entitlement to State Pensions and pension-age benefits; this involves modelling whole life courses, including the formation of partnerships (marriage, civil partnership and cohabitation) and dissolution of the same partnerships
- the [Ministry of Justice \(MoJ\)](#) is responsible for policy and legislation on divorces and dissolutions, and is one of the main users of our divorce statistics; divorce and dissolution statistics are used by MoJ to inform policy, financial and workload decisions

Other uses and users include:

- organisations, such as Eurostat and the United Nations, who use our divorce statistics to compare similar statistics across different nations and the development of other statistical measures based on divorce statistics
- organisations in the voluntary sector who may use our divorce and dissolution statistics to support campaigns; these organisations often pass on our statistics to their own users
- lawyers, solicitors and those involved in family law who use marriage, divorce and civil partnership data to comment on trends in case law; they also use these data to predict likely future trends in legal business, such as divorce and dissolution cases, inheritance and family law
- academics and researchers who use divorce and dissolution data for research into family change and to assess the implications on care, housing and finances in later life
- the media, which has a high level of interest in divorces, especially the recent [trend for older people to divorce](#).

5 . Quality characteristics of the Divorces and dissolutions in England and Wales data

Relevance

In this context, we are referring to the term “relevance” to describe the degree to which statistical outputs meet users' needs.

Our divorce and dissolution statistics represent both divorces, dissolutions and annulments that took place in England and Wales, and report figures for a calendar year. From 2022 onwards, all annulments took place under the old law; there is no provision for annulments under the new law.

For the 2022 release onwards, civil partnership dissolutions are reported at the same time as our divorce statistics; the data can be found separately in our [Civil partnerships dissolutions dataset](#). Our divorce and dissolution statistics do not count married couples who separate but do not divorce.

Divorce statistics, marriage and civil partnership formation and dissolution statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), are used widely to:

- report on social and demographic trends
- inform policymakers about recent trends and policy impact, such as the proportion of marriages that end in divorce
- perform further analyses, for example, comparing trends in divorce with civil partnership dissolutions
- make international comparisons

We are unable to produce divorce or dissolution statistics by area of residence. Divorce and dissolution data provided to us by the courts do not contain information on the area of residence of the parties. Since 2018, [Family Court Statistics Quarterly](#) published by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has included a file in CSV format, containing the applicant's area of usual residence. Information on the location of the court is also available in the collection. Court location does not accurately reflect where parties lived either before or after separation, and divorce courts were centralised in 2015 to 11 main divorce centres throughout England and Wales.

Accuracy and reliability

In this context, “accuracy and reliability” are referring to the degree of closeness between an estimate and the true value.

Divorce and dissolution information recorded by the courts and provided to His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) is supplied by the applicant (also known as petitioner before April 2022) and respondents on the divorce form when legally filing an application. As the information is required for a legal process, we consider the data to be of high quality, especially as the applicant must swear under oath (an affidavit) that the information supplied is correct. There is no routine independent statistical verification of the data, but editing checks are carried out to detect clerical, coding and keying errors.

Since 2018, HMCTS has provided an online service for applying for the dissolution of a legal partnership. HMCTS estimated that the simpler and less technical service had contributed to a 95% drop in the number of applications being returned to the applicant because of mistakes compared with paper forms.

Revisions of divorce or dissolution statistics do not occur frequently. However, sometimes it is necessary to revise the statistics following improvements made to the data collection, data sources and quality assurance methods. In January 2010, we released revised divorce statistics for 2003 to 2007 following the identification of duplicates in the dataset. Duplicates were identified because of discrepancy work that investigated the differences between the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and MoJ divorce statistics. MoJ also revised their figures back to 2003.

Further quality work was carried out later in 2010 in preparation for comparing ONS divorce records with MoJ systems to establish the remaining differences. This work alerted us to the remaining duplicates within our divorce datasets. It was later determined that the original duplicate check carried out on the datasets had not been sufficient. New duplicate checks were introduced onto the system and in February 2011, we revised divorce data back to 2003 again. A [statement about the differences between ONS and MoJ divorce figures](#) was published in June 2012.

The court system in England and Wales records all divorces and dissolutions taking place in England and Wales, regardless of the usual residence of the two parties. The marriage can have occurred abroad, but it must be legally recognised in England and Wales, and one of the parties must have a permanent home in England and Wales.

It is possible that some people who are usually resident in England and Wales may undertake divorce proceedings in another country, so are not included in the divorce statistics for England and Wales. Similarly, some people who are overseas residents may divorce in England and Wales. It is likely that the numbers of divorces taking place abroad are low, so the exclusion of such divorces will not impact the main uses of the data.

The latest available population estimates by marital status are used in the calculation of divorce and dissolution rates. If the population estimates by marital status are revised, our published rates are recalculated using these estimates and noted in published tables.

Output quality trade-offs

In this context, trade-offs are the extent to which different dimensions of quality are balanced against each other.)

Prior to the 2013 data year, when divorce and dissolution records began to be received electronically, each year a certain number of cases were not included in the published figures. This was because the decree absolute paper forms were received later than the date on which the annual dataset was taken.

A table published in our [User guide to divorce statistics](#) shows the difference between the number of divorces stored on our database and the number included in our publications each year. Although this means some divorces were not included in the statistics, it was a necessary compromise needed to publish timely data. The electronic receipt of data now means that we receive nearly all divorces in a year in time for the annual publication.

In the 2023 data year, there was an increase in the number of cases where the sex of the applicant, respondent, or both was missing. Where only one party's sex was missing, it was possible to manually assign the missing information using the recorded partnership type and the known sex of the other party. However, in cases where both sexes were missing, or where the partnership type did not align with the listed sexes, these records were classified as "Unspecified" in published tables.

From 6 April 2022, information on grounds for divorce or dissolution is no longer collected during the legal process. Additionally, it is possible for both members of a couple to apply for a divorce or dissolution jointly under the new law. For this reason, the data in our published [Divorces dataset](#) reflects a partial year for 2022 in Table 1b, while Tables 4a and 4b contain data on divorces granted under the old legislation only. Similarly, Table 2 of our separate [Dissolutions dataset](#) contains data for a partial year for 2022.

From the 2020 data year onwards, information about the age and previous marital status of people who divorce or dissolve their civil partnership is not available as it is no longer collected during the legal process. Our published data tables, which previously presented statistics by age and marital status, have therefore been removed. However, these data tables are still available through our [Divorces in England and Wales dataset](#) and [Civil partnership dissolutions in England and Wales dataset](#).

For the 2019 data year and earlier years, there are missing values for some variables in the divorce and dissolution records. This specifically includes the age at marriage or civil partnership, and previous marital status variables. Prior to the 2014 data year, in cases where one or more of the items of information collected was found to be missing, the procedure adopted was:

- age at legal partnership: this was imputed using a series of look-up tables, depending on whether the age of one or both parties was missing
- marital status at legal partnership: all parties were assumed to have never been married or civil partnered
- date of legal partnership: this was rarely missing; where it was missing, age at divorce could not be derived and was recorded as "not stated" because date of marriage was missing or incomplete

The level of imputation for age at marriage (or civil partnership) and marital status at marriage increased between 2003 and 2013. During the divorce and dissolution process these fields are taken from the marriage certificate supplied by the applicant. Some marriage certificates relating to marriages that took place outside of England and Wales do not contain these variables. Marital status and age at marriage or civil partnership are also not mandatory fields in the divorce or dissolution process and consequently are not always collected by the courts. Data have not been imputed for the 2014 data year onwards, and "not stated" categories have been added to published tables instead.

For the 2014 to 2019 data years, we saw increases in the proportion of records where the age at marriage or civil partnership of one or both members of a divorcing or dissolving couple is not available. This age at marriage information is required for calculating age at divorce or dissolution. Consequently, any calculations based on age for these years exclude these records.

As of 2020, information regarding age and marital status is no longer available. As a result, divorce rates broken down by age have been removed from the dataset. They are still available in the 2021 edition of the [Divorces in England and Wales dataset](#). The latest data year available is 2019.

A very small number of divorce and dissolution records for England and Wales can be received by the ONS later than the date on which the annual dataset is taken. These records are therefore not included in published figures. The impact is negligible.

Coherence and comparability

In this context, coherence is the degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar. Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain, for example, geographical level.

Prior to 2022, methods for compiling divorce and dissolution statistics and the data collected at divorce or dissolution have remained relatively unchanged for many years. Time series data are available on a comparable basis back to 1858 in some divorce tables. It is not possible for some tables to include more historical data because not all data are available electronically to reprocess.

Divorces and dissolutions taking place in Scotland and Northern Ireland are recorded by the courts in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Comparability between countries within the UK is possible for divorces and dissolutions, as they are recognised across the UK. However, the Marriage and Civil Partnership (minimum age) Act 2022 raised the minimum age for marriage and civil partnership in England and Wales from 27 February 2023. As a result, the minimum legal age at which an individual can divorce or dissolve a civil partnership in England and Wales now differs from Scotland and Ireland. We quality assure divorce data for England and Wales. We also coordinate and publish statistics for the whole of the UK, with breakdowns for each constituent country.

Following the introduction of The Marriage and Civil Partnership (minimum Age) Act 2022, which came into effect on 27 February 2023, the minimum age a person can get married or enter into a civil partnership in England or Wales is 18 years. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, this remains to be 16 years of age. This will affect figures from the 2023 data year onwards; there will be a difference between countries of the UK from 2023.

Although both the [Scottish Government](#) and [Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(NISRA\)](#) publish regular divorce statistics for their own countries, by collating all the data in our [Vital statistics in the UK: births, deaths and marriages](#) publication, figures can be easily compared across countries.

Comparability is maximised by the following:

- divorce statistics published by the ONS, Scottish Government and NISRA are all produced using date of final order
- divorce statistics published by the ONS, Scottish Government and NISRA are compiled from returns of "orders made final" supplied by the courts and include nullities of marriage; this is also the case for many countries internationally, including New Zealand and Australia

MoJ also publish a summary of divorce and dissolution figures as part of their [Family Court Statistics Quarterly](#), which are used by court staff for case management purposes.

The number of divorces and dissolutions indicated by ONS and MoJ statistics, while similar, do not match exactly. Some of the difference is the result of not counting precisely the same cases. For example:

- ONS divorce figures up to 2023 (under old law) include annulments while MoJ figures do not; the number of annulments in 2023 published by MoJ was 253
- since 2007, divorce figures published by MoJ have included dissolutions of civil partnerships, which are not included in our figures; the total number of civil partnership dissolutions in 2023 published in our [Civil partnership dissolutions dataset](#) was 1,138
- there are likely to be differences because of differing dates of extraction

Occasionally, MoJ may revise their published statistics, for example, to account for identified reporting errors. These revisions are usually small and are not reflected in ONS divorce statistics that have already been published.

Prior to the 2013 data year, some other differences also existed from the way data were collected and processed. These include:

- differences in the number of late divorce records excluded from both MoJ and our annual datasets
- differences in the process to remove duplicate records
- differences between the number of records entered onto the FamilyMan system and the number of paper records received by us from courts

In June 2012, together with MoJ, we published a [statement on differences](#) between these figures that existed at the time, and worked closely together to reconcile the two sets of statistics as far as possible.

Our divorce and dissolution statistics are not directly comparable with estimates from census or household surveys such as the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Annual Population Survey (APS). This is because they are estimates of the number of divorcees and individuals who have dissolved a civil partnership rather than the number of divorces or dissolutions that took place during a particular year.

Concepts and definitions

(Concepts and definitions describe the legislation governing the output and a description of the classifications used in the output.)

Information on the legislation governing divorces is contained within Section 2 of our [User guide to divorce statistics](#). Specifically, these relate to:

- the [Matrimonial Causes Act 1973](#)
- the [Divorce Reform Act 1969](#)
- the [Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984](#)
- the [Marriage \(Same Sex Couples\) Act 2013](#)
- the [Children and Families Act 2014](#)
- the [Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020](#)
- the [Marriage and Civil Partnership \(Minimum Age\) Act 2022](#)

To obtain a divorce or dissolution in England and Wales, a couple must have been married for at least 12 months. Also, the marriage or civil partnership must be legally recognised in England and Wales, and England and Wales must be the permanent home of one or both partners.

For divorce and dissolution applications issued by the court before 6 April 2022 (before the [Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020](#) came into effect), the applicant also had to prove that the marriage had permanently broken down and could not be saved by providing evidence of one or more of the following five reasons (also known as "Facts"):

- adultery (for opposite-sex divorces only)
- behaviour by one partner which means that the other cannot reasonably be expected to live with them
- separation for two years (with consent of partner)
- separation for five years (with or without consent of partner)
- desertion of one party by the other for a period of two years

Adultery was not recognised as a ground for dissolution of a same-sex civil partnership as the legal definition of adultery is sexual intercourse with someone of the opposite sex outside of marriage. However, unfaithfulness could be recognised as a form of unreasonable behaviour.

There are no classifications used in the compilation of our divorce statistics.

The Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 came into effect on 6 April 2022. The Act revises the legal process in England and Wales for married couples to obtain a divorce or judicial separation and for civil partners to dissolve their civil partnership or obtain a separation. The Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 removed the requirement to establish Facts. One or both parties to a marriage may now apply to the court for a divorce order, which dissolves the marriage on the grounds that the marriage has broken down irretrievably; removing the requirement to make allegations about the conduct of a partner (commonly referred to as a "no-fault divorce"). It will no longer be possible to contest a divorce, except on limited grounds including jurisdiction.

The Act also introduces a minimum period of 20 weeks between the start of proceedings and application for the conditional order.

Accessibility and clarity

(Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the release details, illustrations and accompanying advice.)

Following guidance from the Government Statistical Service (GSS) to improve digital accessibility of statistical spreadsheets, our published datasets for divorce and dissolution statistics from the 2020 data year now incorporate and follow this guidance. This is to help improve the usability, accessibility and machine readability of our statistical spreadsheets.

Our recommended format for accessible content is a combination of HTML web pages for narrative, charts and graphs, with data being provided in usable formats such as CSV, Excel, and explorable datasets, such as our [Divorces of opposite-sex couples, England and Wales NOMIS dataset](#). Our website also offers users the option to download the narrative in PDF format. In some instances, other software may be used or may be available on request.

Available formats for content published on our website, but not produced by us, or referenced on our website but stored elsewhere, may vary. For further information please contact pop.info@ons.gov.uk.

For information regarding conditions of access to data, please refer to our [Terms and conditions for data on our website](#) and our [Accessibility statement](#).

Special extracts and tabulations of divorces data for England and Wales are available to order (subject to legal frameworks, disclosure control, resources and our [charging policy](#), where appropriate).

Enquiries should be made to Demography by email to pop.info@ons.gov.uk or by phone on +44 1329 444661. We also publish [user requested data](#).

Timeliness and punctuality

(Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between publication and the period to which the data refer. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates.)

Our divorce and dissolution statistics are currently published approximately 10 to 12 months after the reference year to which the data relate.

The annual release of divorce statistics is announced on the [GOV.UK release calendar](#) at least four weeks in advance and on the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) Release calendar](#).

Final divorce statistics for 2008 to 2015 were published around 12 to 13 months after the end of the data year. From the 2015 data year, divorce data were received monthly, three months after the end of the month. From the 2018 data year, divorce data were received 15 days after the month. This has enabled timely quality assurance and more timely publications from the 2016 data year than previously possible.

There have been five occasions when the divorces release has been delayed:

- the 2022 release was delayed to enable new and revised [population estimates by marital status, as reported in our bulletins](#), to be used in the calculation of divorce rates
- the 2020 release was delayed because of the prioritisation of resources to focus on releases that supported the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- the release of 2013, 2014 and 2015 statistics was delayed because of data-processing changes following the move to receiving electronic data, rather than paper forms; this change occurred from the 2013 data year and more time has been required for detailed quality assurance following the processing changes
- the 2013 release was also delayed to enable new and revised [population estimates by marital status](#) to be used in the calculation of divorce rates
- during quality-assurance work in 2008, we identified a shortfall of divorce records for 2007 for some courts between the ONS and Ministry of Justice (MoJ); further investigation identified that duplicates existed in both datasets, and both organisations began the task of removing these duplicates, so divorce statistics for 2003 to 2007 were revised on 28 January 2010 alongside final summary data for 2008

For more details on related releases, the [GOV.UK release calendar](#) provides advance notice of release dates.

In the unlikely event of a change to the pre-announced release schedule, we will notify users of the change and the reasons for the change as set out in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

6 . Methods used to produce the data

How we collect the data and main data sources

From 2013 to 2019, divorce and dissolution data were extracted from the FamilyMan (FM) case management system. From 2020 data onwards, most divorces and dissolutions cases have been extracted from HM Courts and Tribunals Service's (HMCTS's) Core Case Data (CCD) management system and sent to us electronically. A small number of cases, including annulments and old law cases, continue to be extracted from the previous FM system.

Divorces in 2013 and 2014 were received in annual files. From the 2015 data year, divorce data were received monthly, three months after the end of the month to enable timely quality assurance. Since 2019, data are received within 15 days after the end of the month. A series of checks are performed on the monthly data and any queries are addressed. The final annual dataset is then received three months after the year end.

Before the 2013 data year, divorce and dissolution statistics for England and Wales were derived from data provided on the D105 form and D106 form, respectively. These were used to record decree absolutes (now called final orders). These paper forms were sent to us by the courts.

Most figures are based on the basic data supplied but some are based on derived information, including:

- duration of marriage to final order (or decree absolute before April 2022) – this is derived from date of marriage and date of final order
- age at divorce or dissolution – this is derived up until the 2019 data year from age at marriage or civil partnership and duration of marriage or civil partnership; from this, an age (at last birthday) at the date of divorce or dissolution is derived (since 2020, changes to the divorce form mean this information is no longer available, so we can no longer publish statistics on age)
- age of child at application – this is derived up until the 2015 data year from date of birth of child and date of application (since 2014 it has not been mandatory for couples divorcing to provide dates of birth of children, so we no longer publish statistics on children)

Divorce and dissolution rates are published for England and Wales (combined). Divorce rates are the number of people divorcing per thousand married males and females, while dissolution rates are the number of people dissolving civil partnerships per thousand civil partnered males and females. Both rates use the latest available [population estimates by marital status](#).

Divorce rates for both same-sex couples and opposite-sex couples have traditionally been calculated using the total married population. Dissolution rates for both same-sex couples and opposite-sex couples have also been calculated using the total civil partnered population. This is because these rates were originally calculated by age group, and population estimates by marital status are only available by age group for the total married and civil partnered population. They are not published for same-sex and opposite-sex married or civil partnered populations separately.

Since the 2020 data year, information on age is no longer collected as part of the divorce or dissolution process, so we are no longer able to calculate divorce or dissolution rates by age. We are planning to review the way divorce rates are calculated in the future. In the interim, users can use these rates to look at trends in divorce for opposite-sex or same-sex couples over time.

However, while total married population estimates are used as denominators, they should not be used to compare the rates of divorce for same-sex and opposite-sex couples. As opposite-sex couples account for a much greater proportion of the married population than same-sex couples, divorce rates for same-sex couples will be very small in comparison to opposite-sex couples if the total married population is used as the denominator for both. This also means that trends in divorce rates for same-sex couples will be difficult to determine over time.

Similarly, dissolution rates are calculated using total civil partnered population estimates as denominators. These should not be used to compare rates between same-sex and opposite-sex civil partners, as same-sex couples represent a much larger share of the civil partnered population. As a result, dissolution rates for opposite-sex couples will be comparatively small and trends between the two groups are not directly comparable. In addition, because estimates of the civil partnered population are based on very small sample sizes, dissolution rates can be subject to random fluctuation and so are less robust than divorce rates

How we process, analyse, quality assure and validate the data

Divorce and dissolution data are extracted mainly from the HMCTS's CCD management system and sent to us monthly. A small number of cases, including annulments and old law cases, are still extracted from the previous FM management system.

We conduct quality assurance tasks throughout the year on the dataset in preparation for the release of annual figures. These include:

- completeness checks, which consider whether any records may be missing; this is based on a comparison with MoJ divorce figures for the same period
- inconsistency checks within the dataset to ensure minimal internal errors

During the quality assurance of the annual dataset, further checks are carried out, including frequency checks and comparisons with the previous year's data as well as checks for duplicates.

Any queries with the data are referred to HMCTS for investigation and records are amended where necessary. Once all checks have been completed and queries resolved, the annual tables for publication are created.

7 . Other information

Assessment of user needs and perceptions

(The processes for finding out about uses and users, and their views on the statistical products.)

We welcome feedback on the content, format and relevance of our releases and encourage you to send feedback by email to pop.info@ons.gov.uk.

Users can also provide feedback using links in our datasets.

Feedback is requested with all emails sent by our Population Statistics Engagement and Support (PSES) team in Demography.

Feedback is also received through our regular attendance at user group meetings and conferences.

Following the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples, we published a consultation in October 2013 to understand [user requirements for marriage, divorce and civil partnership statistics](#). The information provided was used to help us review our marriage, divorce and civil partnership statistics to meet user needs as much as possible. We also published a [summary of the responses to the consultation and future plans](#) was published.

8 . Useful links

[Divorces and dissolutions in England and Wales: 2023](#)

Bulletin | Released 2 July 2025

Annual divorce and civil partnership dissolution numbers and rates, partnership type, to whom granted and duration of marriage. Presented by year, partnership type, duration of marriage to final order, age at divorce or dissolution, and the grounds for divorce (where available).

[Population estimates by marital status](#)

Bulletin | Released 25 January 2024

Annual estimates of population by legal marital status (single, married, civil partnered, divorced, and widowed) and cohabitation status for England and Wales.

[Civil partnerships dissolutions](#)

Dataset | Updated annually

Annual statistics on dissolutions of civil partnerships analysed by the couple's sex and by the quarter of occurrence, in England and Wales.

[Vital statistics in the UK: births, deaths and marriages](#)

Dataset | Released 24 February 2023

Annual divorce figures for the UK and constituent countries.

[Marriages in England and Wales](#)

Bulletin | Released 20 June 2024

Number of marriages that took place in England and Wales analysed by age, sex, previous partnership status and civil or religious ceremony.

[Civil partnership formations and dissolutions](#)

Bulletin | Released 29 February 2024

Number of civil partnership formations in England and Wales analysed by age, sex, previous legal partnership status and registration area.

[Families and households in the UK](#)

Bulletin | Released 8 May 2024

Estimates of families (with and without children), people living alone and people in shared accommodation, broken down by size and type of household.

[Divorce and dissolution statistics for Scotland](#)

Statistical release | Released annually

Statistics on civil law cases in the Scottish courts together with other related information, such as statistics from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey.

[Divorces for Northern Ireland](#)

Statistical release | Released annually

Annual statistics in divorces completed in Northern Ireland from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

[Registrar General Northern Ireland Annual Report 2023 Civil Partnership Dissolutions](#)

Statistical release | Released 6 February 2025

Annual statistics on civil partnership dissolutions in Northern Ireland from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

9 . Cite this methodology

Office for National Statistics (ONS), last revised 2 July 2025, ONS website, methodology, [Divorces and dissolutions in England and Wales Quality and Methodology Information](#)