

Statistical bulletin

Civil partnerships in England and Wales: 2020

Annual statistics on formations and dissolutions of civil partnerships analysed by the couples' sex, age, previous marital status and the place of registration.



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Release date:
13 December 2021

Next release:
To be announced

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1 . Main points

- In 2020, there were 7,566 opposite-sex civil partnerships formed in England and Wales, of which 7,208 were registered in England and 358 were registered in Wales; this is the first year that civil partnerships between opposite-sex couples have been reported.
- There were 785 civil partnerships formed between same-sex couples in England and Wales in 2020, of which 745 were registered in England and 40 were registered in Wales; this is the lowest number recorded for England since the introduction of civil partnerships in 2005.
- Around three-quarters (73%) of same-sex civil partnerships formed in England and Wales in 2020 were to couples where both partners had never been in a marriage or civil partnership before; however, for opposite-sex partnerships, this was just over half (52%).
- In 2020, the average (median) age at civil partnership for opposite-sex couples was 58.9 years for men and 56.3 years for women; for same-sex couples, the average ages at civil partnership were lower (49.8 years and 50.1 years respectively).
- Less than one in five (19%) of those entering a same-sex civil partnership in England and Wales in 2020 were aged 65 years and over; in contrast, 29% of those entering an opposite-sex civil partnership were aged 65 years and over.
- There were 671 same-sex civil partnership dissolutions granted in England and Wales in 2020, a decrease of 27% from 916 in 2019; of these, 54% were to female couples.

2 . Civil partnerships in England and Wales data

[Civil partnership formations](#)

Dataset | Released 13 December 2021

Annual statistics on the number of civil partnership formations that took place in England and Wales analysed by sex, age, previous marital status and area of occurrence.

[Civil partnership dissolutions](#)

Dataset | Released 13 December 2021

Annual statistics on the number of civil partnership dissolutions that took place in England and Wales analysed by sex and quarter of occurrence.

3 . Glossary

Civil partnership

A civil partnership is a legal relationship between two people of the same or opposite sex.

Civil partnership formation

A civil partnership is formed when the parties involved register as civil partners in the presence of a registration officer and two witnesses.

Civil partnership dissolution

A civil partnership dissolution is the termination of a civil partnership and is a procedure similar to divorce. The grounds for ending a civil partnership are similar to those available to married couples, with the exception of adultery.

General Register Office

The [General Register Office \(GRO\)](#) is responsible for ensuring the registration of all births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships that have occurred in England and Wales and for maintaining a central archive. The GRO has been part of the Identity and Passport Service since 1 April 2008. The Identity and Passport Service was renamed HM Passport Office on 13 May 2013.

HM Courts and Tribunals Service

[HM Courts and Tribunals Service \(HMCTS\)](#) is an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice and is responsible for the administration of criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales. This includes the administration of the divorce and civil partnership dissolution processes.

Government Equalities Office

The [Government Equalities Office \(GEO\)](#) is the government department responsible for a range of equalities policy and legislation. The GEO is also the lead department on gender and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues in government. This includes the [Civil Partnership Act 2004](#), [Marriage \(Same Sex Couples\) Act 2013](#) and [Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths \(Registration etc.\) Act 2019](#).

Single men or women

Single men or women are persons who have never previously been married or formed a civil partnership.

4 . Measuring the data

This is the first time that civil partnership statistics for England and Wales have been published for 2020. The release provides final annual data.

Civil partnership formation statistics are derived from information recorded when civil partnerships are registered as part of civil registration, which is a legal requirement. Figures represent civil partnerships that are formed in England and Wales only; civil partnership formations to residents of England and Wales that take place abroad are not included.

Civil partnership dissolution statistics are derived from information recorded by HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) during the dissolution process; figures include annulments. Dissolution statistics do not include couples who separate but do not dissolve their civil partnership. Dissolutions where the civil partnership formation took place abroad are included, provided the civil partnership was legally recognised in the UK and one of the parties has a permanent home in England or Wales.

Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Civil partnership and marriage registration services in England and Wales were disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic and the lockdown restrictions in 2020. This is likely to have resulted in fewer civil partnerships being formed during the year than would have been the case in a normal (non-pandemic) year. It may have also impacted the number of dissolutions granted during this period.

Quality and Methodology

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the [Civil partnerships in England and Wales QMI](#).

Comparability

The [Civil Partnership Act 2004](#) was introduced for the whole of the UK, making same-sex civil partnership statistics across the UK countries comparable. Recent changes in legislation have also enabled opposite-sex couples to form civil partnerships across all countries of the UK. More information on comparability across the UK and the different legislative changes can be found in the [Civil partnerships in England and Wales QMI](#).

Accuracy

From the 2020 data year onwards, information about the age and previous marital status of dissolving civil partners is not available as it is no longer collected during the divorce and civil partnership dissolution process by HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS).

5 . Related links

[Civil partnership formation statistics for Scotland](#)

Web page | Released 17 August 2021

Marriage and civil partnership formation statistics for Scotland for 2019 and earlier years.

[Civil partnership dissolution statistics for Scotland](#)

Publication | Released 27 April 2021

Civil justice statistics in Scotland, including main statistics tables, figures and supplementary data tables including civil partnership dissolution statistics.

[Civil partnership statistics for Northern Ireland](#)

Web page | Released 21 October 2021

Civil partnership formation and dissolution statistics for Northern Ireland.

[Civil Partnerships Five Years On \(PDF, 190KB\)](#)

Article | Released July 2011

Compares estimates of the number of men and women living in a civil partnership derived from registration data, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Annual Population Survey (APS) for 2006 to 2010.

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

Publication | Released 3 December 2021

Annual UK and constituent country figures for births, deaths, marriages, divorces, civil partnerships and civil partnership dissolutions for the latest years available.

[Population estimates by marital status and living arrangements, England and Wales: 2019](#)

Bulletin | Released 17 July 2020

Annual estimates of population by legal marital status and cohabitation status by age and sex for England and Wales.