

Statistical bulletin

# Civil Partnerships in England and Wales: 2014

Formations and dissolutions of civil partnerships analysed by the sex, age, and previous marital status of the couples and the place of registration.



Contact:  
Elizabeth McLaren  
vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk

Release date:  
20 October 2015

Next release:  
To be announced

## Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Background](#)
3. [Number of civil partnership formations](#)
4. [Civil partnerships by sex](#)
5. [Civil partnerships by age](#)
6. [Civil partnerships by area of formation](#)
7. [Civil partnerships by previous partnership status](#)
8. [Number of dissolutions](#)
9. [Civil partnership dissolutions by age, sex and previous marital status](#)
10. [What is the future of civil partnerships?](#)
11. [Users of civil partnership statistics](#)
12. [Further information](#)
13. [Background notes](#)

# 1. Main points

- Following the introduction of marriages of same sex couples in March 2014, the number of civil partnerships formed in England and Wales has fallen by 70% from 5,646 in 2013 to 1,683 in 2014
- The mean age of men forming a civil partnership in England and Wales in 2014 was 43.6 years, while for women it was 42.3 years, increasing by 3 years for men and 4 years for women since 2013. This is the largest annual increase in the mean age at formation since civil partnerships were introduced in 2005
- Over half (57%) of civil partnerships were between males in 2014; a change from 2013 when only 47% of partnerships were between males
- The number of civil partnership dissolutions granted in 2014 was 1,061, an increase of 8.9% since 2013

## 2. Background

This bulletin presents annual statistics on civil partnerships that were formed and dissolved in England and Wales in 2014. Figures for the UK are published in the [Vital Statistics: Population and Health Reference Tables](#).

Civil partnerships are a legal recognition of a relationship between 2 people of the same sex. A dissolution is a legal end to a civil partnership obtained through the courts. [Statistics on marriages of same sex couples](#) are published separately, figures for March 2014 to June 2015 are available on our website.

Civil partnership statistics are analysed by sex, age, previous marital status and area of occurrence. All figures are final.

Civil partnership formation statistics are derived from information recorded when civil partnerships are registered as part of civil registration, as required by law. Civil partnership dissolution statistics have been compiled from court records and include annulments.

This is the first time annual 2014 civil partnership statistics for England and Wales have been published.

Following the [civil partnership consultation](#), coverage of the [annual civil partnership statistics](#) has been altered from UK to England and Wales only.

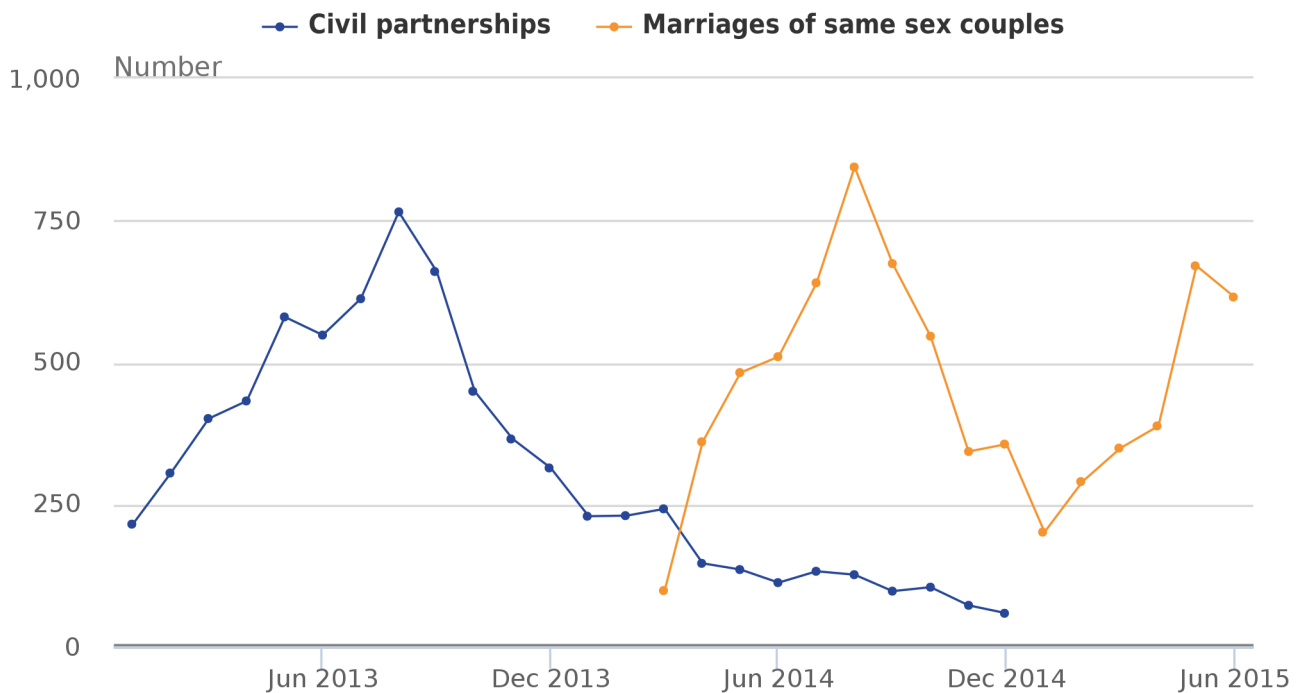
Summary figures for the UK will continue to be published in the [Vital Statistics: Population and Health Reference Tables](#). Civil partnership data for Scotland are published by [National Records of Scotland](#) and the [Scottish Government](#), and for Northern Ireland by the [Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#). This is to allow for more timely publication of England and Wales civil partnership statistics. The full details and [results of the consultation](#) are available.

## 3. Number of civil partnership formations

In 2014, the number of civil partnerships formed in England and Wales by same sex couples decreased by 70% to 1,683, from 5,646 in 2013. Figure 1 shows the declining trend set against the development and introduction of the [Marriage \(Same Sex Couples\) Act 2013](#).

**Figure 1: Civil partnership formations and marriages of same sex couples, January 2013 to June 2015**

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. The first marriages of same sex couples could take place on 29 March 2014
2. Civil partnership statistics are only available for 2014. Provisional marriage statistics for same sex couples are available up to 30 June 2015

The Queen granted Royal Assent to the Bill on 17 July 2013, thereby becoming The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. An announcement was made in December 2013 that marriages of same sex couples could be formed from 29 March 2014. Following this announcement, there was a very small rise in the number of civil partnerships formed in January 2014 compared with January 2013. However, from February 2014, the number of civil partnerships formed each month began to fall notably when compared with the same month a year earlier (Figure 1). In December 2014, only 58 civil partnerships were formed compared with 314 in December 2013, a fall of 82%. The small rise in civil partnerships in January 2014, compared with a year earlier, is likely to be due to ceremonies booked prior to the December 2013 announcement and happening soon after, continuing to take place.

The number of marriages of same sex couples increased from March 2014 to a peak in August 2014 of 844 marriages.

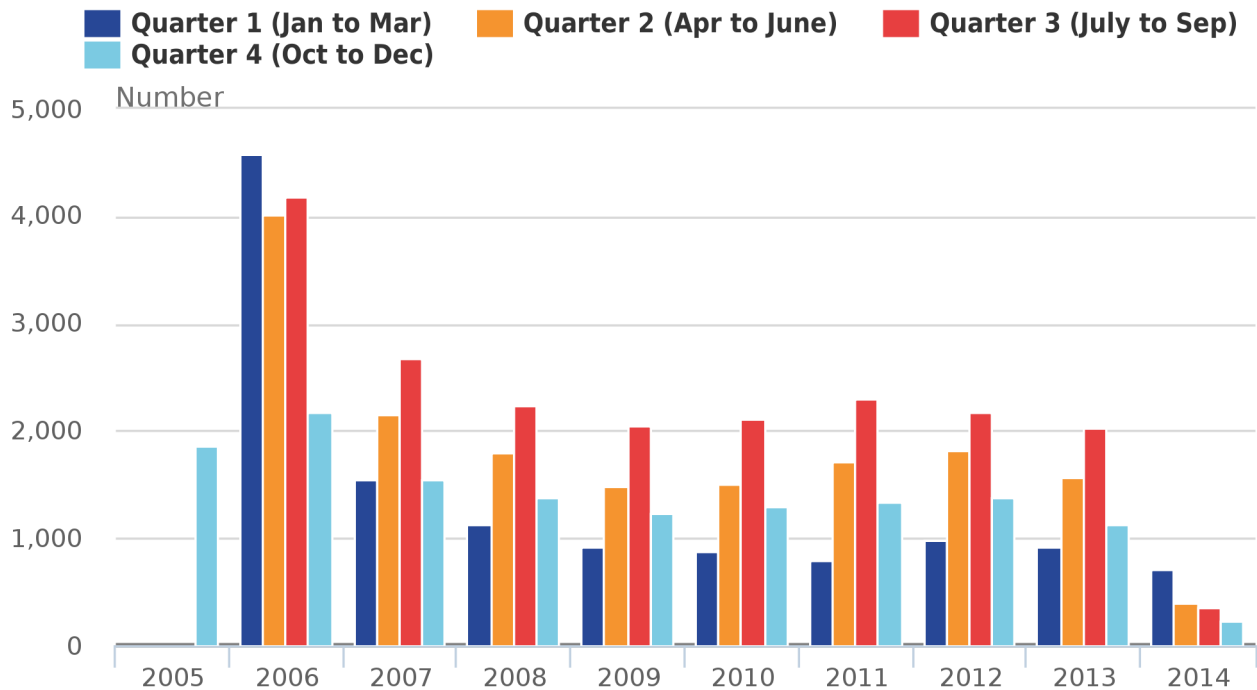
From 10 December 2014, same sex couples in civil partnerships have been able to convert their existing partnership into a marriage, if they desired, under [The Marriage of Same Sex Couples \(Conversion of Civil Partnership\) Regulations 2014](#). Provisional data on civil partnership conversions show that between 10 December 2014 and 30 June 2015 there have been 7,732 couples choosing to convert their civil partnership.

More data on [marriages of same sex couples and civil partnership conversions](#) are available on our website.

The number of civil partnerships in England and Wales peaked in the first quarter of 2006 at 4,579 (Figure 2). The high numbers for 2006 are likely to be a result of many same sex couples in long-standing relationships taking advantage of the opportunity to formalise their relationship as soon as the legislation was implemented. During 2008 to 2013 civil partnerships had fallen to an average of around 1,400 to 1,600 per quarter. These are similar trends to those in Norway and Sweden where there was a particularly high level of formations immediately after legislation was introduced, followed by a few years of stable numbers at a lower level ([The demographics of same-sex marriages in Norway and Sweden](#)).

**Figure 2: Number of civil partnership formations by quarter, 2005 to 2014**

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. The Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into force on 5 December 2005
2. The first marriages of same sex couples could take place on 29 March 2014

Since the Civil Partnership Act came into force in December 2005, the total number of civil partnerships formed in England and Wales up to the end of 2014 is 62,621.

There were more people in civil partnerships by 2010 than originally estimated in the regulatory impact assessment on the Civil Partnership Act 2004. The impact assessment suggested that by 2010 the estimated likely take-up of civil partnerships in Great Britain would be between 11,000 and 22,000 people in civil partnerships ([Government Equalities Office, 2004](#)). At the start of 2010, there were over 79,000 people in civil partnerships in Great Britain.

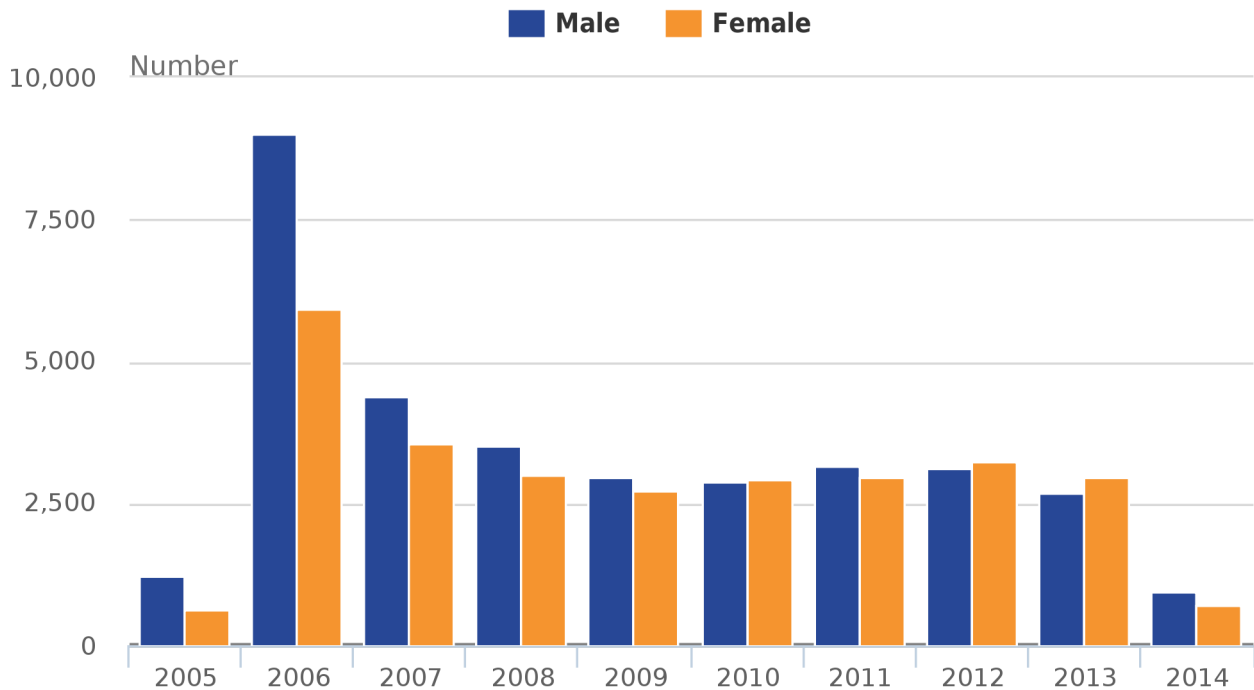
## 4. Civil partnerships by sex

In 2014, over half (57%) of civil partnerships formed were between male couples, this is a change from 2013 when only 47% were between males. Statistics on [marriages of same sex couples](#) show that more female couples are marrying than male couples, this may account for the difference.

Initially the numbers of males forming civil partnerships were much higher than females, but the numbers of male and female civil partnerships converged in 2009/10 (Figure 3). This is similar to trends recorded in other European countries where the majority of early same sex partnerships were formed by male couples with figures for males and females converging a few years after ([The demographics of same-sex marriages in Norway and Sweden](#)).

**Figure 3: Civil partnership formations by sex, 2005 to 2014**

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. The Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into force on 5 December 2005
2. The first marriages of same sex couples could take place on 29 March 2014

## 5. Civil partnerships by age

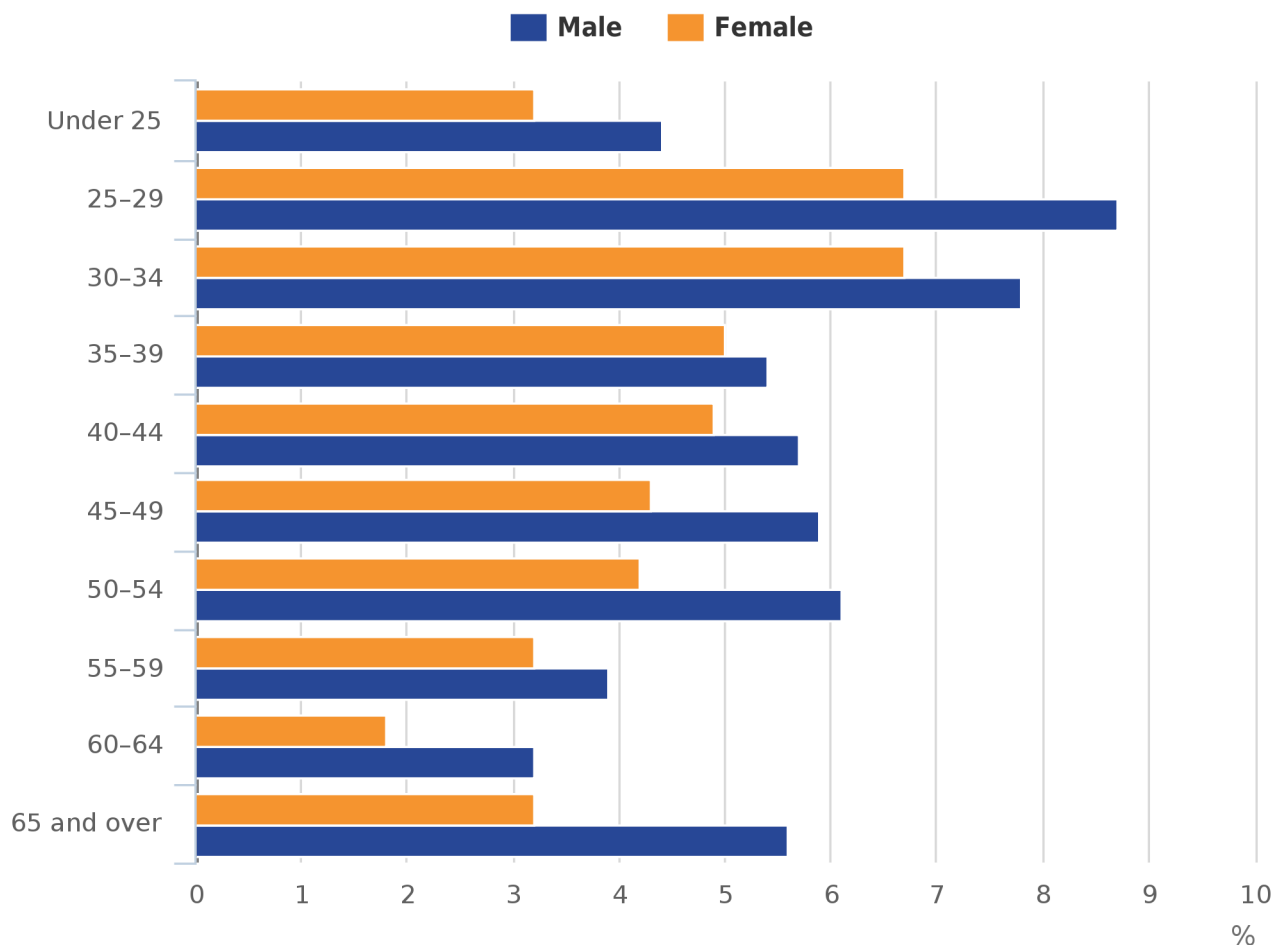
In 2014, the average (mean) age at formation of civil partnership in England and Wales increased by nearly 3 years for men to 43.6 years and over 4 years for women to 42.3 years. These increases represent the largest annual increase in the average age at formation since civil partnerships were introduced in 2005. This is a likely consequence of the introduction of marriages of same sex couples.

The average age for same sex couples marrying between 29 March 2014 and 30 June 2015 is more similar to the average age at civil partnership formation in 2013, at 39.8 years for men and 37.1 years for women. For marriages of opposite sex couples, the mean age at marriage is slightly lower at 36.5 years for men and 34.0 years for women in 2012 (provisional figures).

In 2014, there were more male civil partners than females in all age groups (Figure 4). The highest proportions of civil partnerships were formed by males aged 25 to 29 and females aged 25 to 29 and 30 to 34. In 2013, the most common age groups for men to form a civil partnership was higher, at 30 to 34 years, while for women it was 25 to 29 years.

**Figure 4: Percentage of total civil partnership formations by age group and sex, 2014**

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

## 6. Civil partnerships by area of formation

London has been the most popular region in England and Wales to register a civil partnership every year since the legislation was introduced in 2005. In 2014, 31% of all civil partnerships in England and Wales were registered in London (530 civil partnerships).

Brighton and Hove was the local authority with the largest number of civil partnership registrations, with 37 male and 18 female registrations, followed by Wandsworth with 37 male and 10 female registrations.

The distribution of civil partnership formations across England and Wales by county, unitary authority, metropolitan district and London borough is not evenly spread. A couple may choose to register their civil partnership in any registry office or approved location across the UK. Data by area show where the partnership was registered and are not necessarily a good indicator of the area of usual residence.

## 7. Civil partnerships by previous partnership status

In 2014, the majority (76%) of civil partnerships formed in England and Wales were to couples where both partners were single (have never previously entered into a marriage or civil partnership). However, 11% of men and 17% of women forming a civil partnership had been in a previous marriage or civil partnership. These were similar to the proportions for 2013. The proportion of those forming a civil partnership who had been in a previous marriage or civil partnership was higher in Wales (19%) than England (13%).

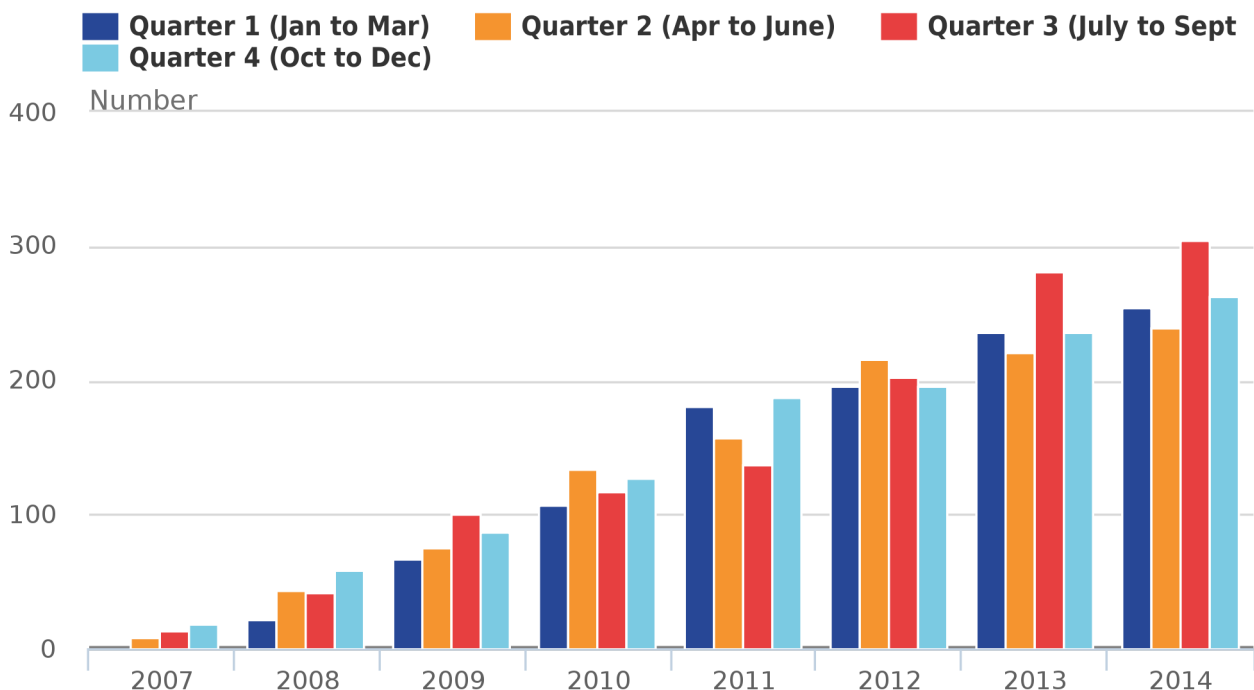
## 8. Number of dissolutions

To obtain a civil partnership dissolution in England and Wales, a couple must have been in either a registered civil partnership, or a same sex partnership recognised abroad, for 12 months. There were 1,061 civil partnership dissolutions granted in England and Wales in 2014, compared with 974 in 2013 (an 8.9% increase). The rising number of dissolutions (Figure 5) is in part a consequence of the increasing number of civil partners living in England and Wales. However, in a few years the number of dissolutions is likely to fall due to the introduction of marriages of same sex couples and the provision for same sex couples to convert an existing civil partnership to a marriage.

By the end of 2014, 5.4% of male civil partnerships in England and Wales had ended in dissolution, while 9.4% of all female partnerships in England and Wales had ended in dissolution (background note 8 has further information).

**Figure 5: Number of civil partnership dissolutions by quarter, 2007 to 2014**

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

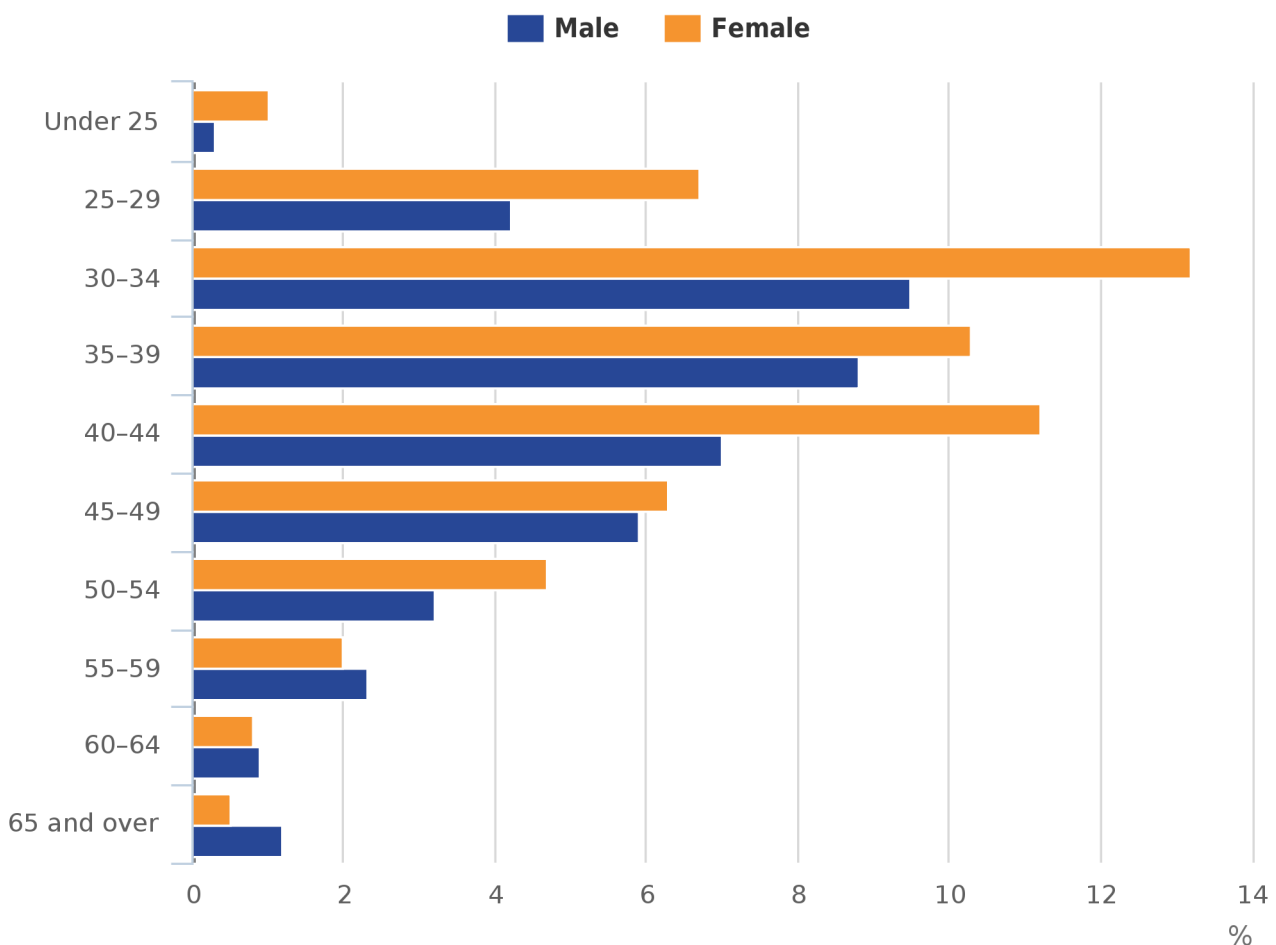
## 9. Civil partnership dissolutions by age, sex and previous marital status

Of the 1,061 dissolutions in 2014, 56% of all dissolutions in England and Wales were to female couples (598 dissolutions) while the remaining 44% were to male couples (463 dissolutions). Higher numbers of dissolutions among female than male partnerships are also seen in other countries with same sex partnership laws, such as Norway and Sweden ([The demographics of same-sex marriages in Norway and Sweden](#)).

The mean age at dissolution of civil partnership in England and Wales in 2014 was 41.1 years for men (an increase from 39.5 years in 2013) and 39.5 for women (an increase from 39.3 years in 2013). Male civil partners are on average older than females when they dissolve a civil partnership. This reflects the higher age at formation of civil partnerships for men than women.

**Figure 6: Percentage of total civil partnership dissolutions by age and sex, 2014**

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

In 2014, more females than males dissolved their civil partnership aged 55 and under while more males dissolved their civil partnership aged 55 and over (Figure 6).

The majority (75%) of civil partnership dissolutions in England and Wales in 2014 were to partners whose previous partnership status was single. However, 9.0% of men and 15% of women dissolving a civil partnership in England and Wales had been in a previous marriage or civil partnership, a similar pattern to 2013.



## 10. What is the future of civil partnerships?

The [Civil Partnership Act 2004](#) enabled same sex couples in England and Wales to obtain legal recognition of their relationship by registering as civil partners of each other. [The Marriage \(Same Sex Couples\) Act 2013](#) enabled same sex couples in England and Wales to marry from 29 March 2014. It also has a number of related provisions, including for those in a civil partnership to convert that relationship to a marriage if they choose to do so and provisions that will enable a person to change their legal gender without ending their existing marriage. These other provisions came into force on 10 December 2014. The Act does not remove the availability of civil partnerships for same sex couples.

The Government Equalities Office carried out a review of the future of civil partnerships in England and Wales, including a full [public consultation](#), which ran between 23 January and 17 April 2014. They received over 10,000 responses to the consultation.

Several important organisations thought it was too soon to consider making changes to civil partnership legislation and that this should wait until the impact of extending marriage to same sex couples is known. Other organisations, in contrast, put forward a case for opening up civil partnerships to opposite sex couples now, for example because civil partnership and marriage were different relationships and all couples should have equal access to both.

Given the lack of consensus on the way forward, the government decided not to make any changes to the [Civil Partnership Act 2004](#).

## 11. Users of civil partnership statistics

Main users of civil partnership statistics include the Government Equalities Office (GEO). GEO takes the lead on civil partnership policy. With the introduction of marriages to same sex couples in 2014, GEO will be monitoring the number of these marriages along with civil partnerships to determine the future of legislation on civil partnerships. GEO use the data to inform ministers and to make forecasts, for example estimating the number of civil partnership conversions into marriage in each area of the UK and overall costs. GEO also monitor the data for future policy considerations. GEO is also the lead for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender equality and uses data on the number of civil partnerships formed and dissolved to inform policy making on a range of issues.

In 2014, the government carried out a review of survivor benefits in occupational pension schemes in accordance with the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) used our statistics to estimate the cost of requiring pension schemes to equalise benefits for same sex partners with opposite sex partners. Occasionally GAD are asked to provide estimates of costs in relation to pension schemes (often for government departments). In the absence of pension scheme data, our statistics are often used to inform the assumption setting process.

Organisations covering gay and lesbian rights and equality issues, for example, Stonewall, use civil partnership statistics to support their campaigns and pass on the data to their own users.

## 12. Further information

More data on [Civil Partnerships in England and Wales in 2014](#) are available on our website.

A [Quality and Methodology Information \(231.9 Kb Pdf\)](#) document for civil partnership statistics is available on our website.

Annual civil partnership figures for the UK and constituent countries can be found in the [Vital Statistics: Population and Health Reference tables](#).

[National Records of Scotland](#) provides civil partnership formation statistics for Scotland.

[Scottish Government](#) provides civil partnership dissolution statistics in Civil Law Statistics.

[Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#) provides civil partnership statistics for Northern Ireland.

Further statistics on [Marriages](#) and [Divorces](#), are available on our website. There are also data on [Families and Households](#) and [population estimates by legal marital status](#) and cohabitation status, including figures on same sex cohabiting couples.

[Census 2011 \(252 Kb Excel sheet\)](#) data provides information on where civil partners were living in England and Wales.

Following a [consultation \(320 Kb Word document\)](#) on the future of population [estimates by marital status](#) and living arrangements, estimates of the population by marital status (including civil partnerships) by age group and sex for 2002 to 2014 now use survey estimates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), constrained to the national mid-year population estimates. Civil partnership formation rates have been revised back to 2005 accordingly.

An article examining [civil partnerships in England and Wales five years](#) on from its introduction was published in September 2011. This article examines civil partnerships and dissolutions between 2005 and 2010, and compares these figures to marriage and divorce figures over the same period.

## 13. Background notes

1. The [Civil Partnership Act 2004](#) came into force on 5 December 2005 in the UK, the first day couples could give notice of their intention to form a civil partnership. The Act enables same sex couples aged 16 and over to obtain legal recognition of their relationship. The first day that couples could normally form a partnership was 21 December 2005 in England and Wales.
2. Prior to the 2013 data year, civil partnership dissolution statistics for England and Wales were derived from data provided on the D106 civil partnership dissolution form sent in to ONS by the courts. From the 2013 data year onwards, civil partnership dissolution data have been extracted from HM Courts and Tribunals Service's FamilyMan case management system and sent electronically to ONS. The publication of Civil Partnerships in England and Wales 2014 is later than originally planned as changing to electronic receipt of data required more time to be spent on detailed quality assurance. Once the new processes are well established, we hope to bring forward the release of civil partnership statistics to around 7 months after the end of the data year.
3. The figures relate only to civil partnerships taking place in England and Wales. They do not include civil partnerships of England or Wales residents taking place abroad but will include non-UK residents who form a partnership in England and Wales.
4. Figures for civil partnership formations in England and Wales are based on date of formation.
5. Data on civil partnership formations are based on area of formation and not area of residence.
6. Data on civil partnership dissolutions are based on country of dissolution and not country of residence.
7. The figures on the percentage of civil partnerships ending in dissolution are derived from the numbers of civil partnerships and dissolutions taking place in England and Wales since the Civil Partnership Act came into force in December 2005. This does not take into account the fact that some civil partnerships which took place in England or Wales may be dissolved in another country or that some dissolutions may take place in England or Wales for a civil partnership which was formed in another country.

8. Civil partnership rates are published for England and Wales (combined) only. The civil partnership rate is the number of people forming a civil partnership per 1,000 unmarried population aged 16 and over (unmarried means single, widowed or divorced). The unmarried population provides the most appropriate denominator for rates. Further information on [population estimates by marital status and living arrangements](#) can be found on our website.
9. The mean ages presented in this release have not been standardised for age and therefore do not take account of the changing structure of the male/female population by age and marital status.
10. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#)
11. A list of the names of those given pre-publication access to the statistics and written commentary is available in [pre-release access list – civil partnerships 2014](#). The rules and principles which govern pre-release access are featured within the [Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008](#).
12. Special extracts and tabulations of civil partnership data are available to order (subject to legal frameworks, disclosure control, resources and agreement of costs, where appropriate). Such enquiries should be made to:

Vital Statistics Output Branch  
Office for National Statistics  
Segensworth Road  
Titchfield  
Fareham  
Hampshire PO15 5RR

Tel: +44 (0)1329 444110

E-mail: [vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

The [ONS charging policy](#) is available on our website. In line with the [ONS approach to open data](#), ad hoc data requests will be published onto [the website](#).

13. We welcome feedback on the content, format and relevance of this release. Please send feedback to the postal or email address above.
14. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting [www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html) or from the Media Relations Office email: [media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs
- are well explained and readily accessible
- are produced according to sound methods
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.