

Statistical bulletin

Civil Partnerships in England and Wales: 2016

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



Contact:
Nicola Haines
vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk
+44 (0)1329 444110

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1 . Main points

- There were 890 civil partnerships formed in England and Wales in 2016, an increase of 3.4% compared with 2015; this is the first annual increase since the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples was announced in 2013.
- More than two-thirds (68%) of all civil partnerships formed in 2016 were between men, the highest proportion since their introduction in 2005.
- Almost half (49%) of those entering a civil partnership in 2016 were aged 50 or above; this compares with 19% in 2013, prior to the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples.
- In 2016, for the second consecutive year, the average age of women forming a civil partnership (49.9 years) was higher than for men (48.6 years).
- London continued to be the most popular region for the formation of civil partnerships; 38% of all formations in England and Wales in 2016 occurred in London.
- There were 1,313 civil partnership dissolutions granted in England and Wales in 2016, of these 60% were to female couples.

2 . Statistician's comment

"Following legislative change enabling marriages of same-sex couples from March 2014, civil partnership formations declined as the majority of same-sex couples opted for marriage instead. However, 2016 represents the first increase in civil partnership formations since this change, showing that a minority of same-sex couples still prefer this option to marriage. Interestingly, male couples accounted for 68% of all civil partnerships in 2016, however, our latest marriage statistics show that male couples accounted for only 44% of all marriages formed between same sex-couples in 2014."

Nicola Haines, Vital Statistics Outputs Branch, Office for National Statistics.

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3 . Things you need to know about this release

Important information for interpreting these statistics:

- civil partnership formation statistics are derived from information recorded when civil partnerships are registered as part of civil registration, 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 Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) during the dissolution process, figures include annulments
- our 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 had a permanent home in England and Wales
- statistics on marriages of same-sex couples are published in our annual [Marriages in England and Wales](#) release from the 2014 data year onwards

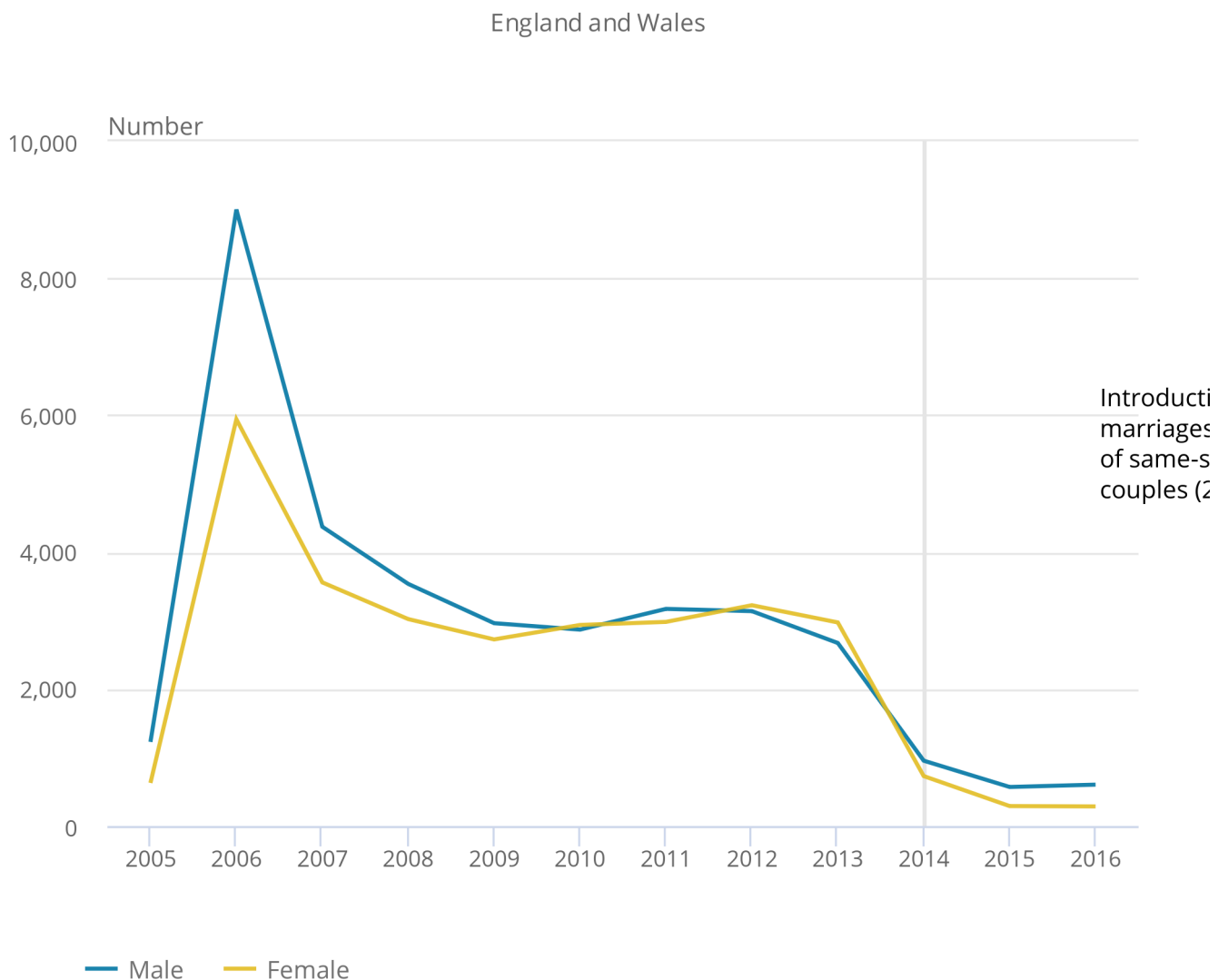
4 . The number of civil partnerships formed increased in 2016

This is the first year that civil partnership formations have not declined since the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples was announced in December 2013. There were 890 civil partnerships formed in England and Wales in 2016, a rise of 3.4% compared with 861 in 2015 (Figure 1). However, civil partnership formations in 2016 are still 84% lower than in 2013 and 47% lower than in 2014, a consequence of the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples in March 2014.

Figure 1: Civil partnership formations by sex, 2005 to 2016

England and Wales

Figure 1: Civil partnership formations by sex, 2005 to 2016



Source: Office for National Statistics

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Following the introduction of the [Civil Partnership Act 2004](#), the first day that couples could normally form a partnership was 21 December 2005 in England and Wales.
2. An announcement was made in December 2013 that marriages of same-sex couples could take place in England and Wales from 29 March 2014.

The rise in civil partnership formations between 2015 and 2016 was driven by a 5.9% increase in civil partnerships between men; the number of women forming civil partnerships decreased by 1.7%.

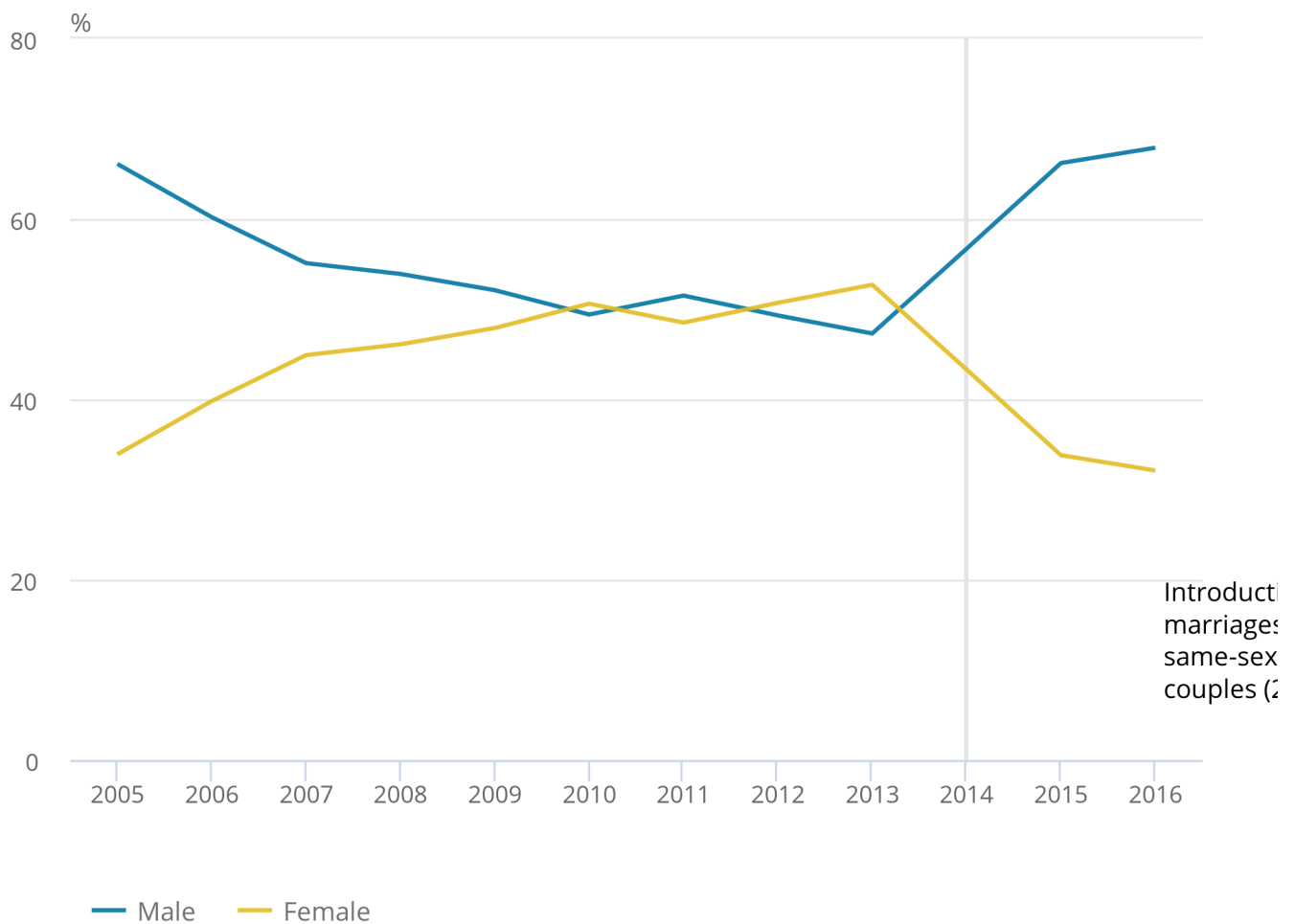
Over two-thirds (68%) of all civil partnerships formed in 2016 were between men, the highest proportion since the introduction of civil partnerships in 2005 (Figure 2). In contrast, our latest [statistics on marriages](#) show that in 2014, only 44% of same-sex couples marrying were male.

Figure 2: Civil partnership formations by sex (percentage), 2005 to 2016

England and Wales

Figure 2: Civil partnership formations by sex (percentage), 2005 to 2016

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Source: Office for National Statistics

In 2006, the first full year in which civil partnerships could be formed, male couples accounted for 60% of all civil partnerships. During the years 2009 to 2013, the number of civil partnerships formed by male and female couples was roughly equal. Since the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples in 2014, the percentage of civil partnerships formed by male couples has steadily increased from 57% in 2014 to 68% in 2016.

5 . Almost half of those entering a civil partnership in 2016 were aged 50 and over

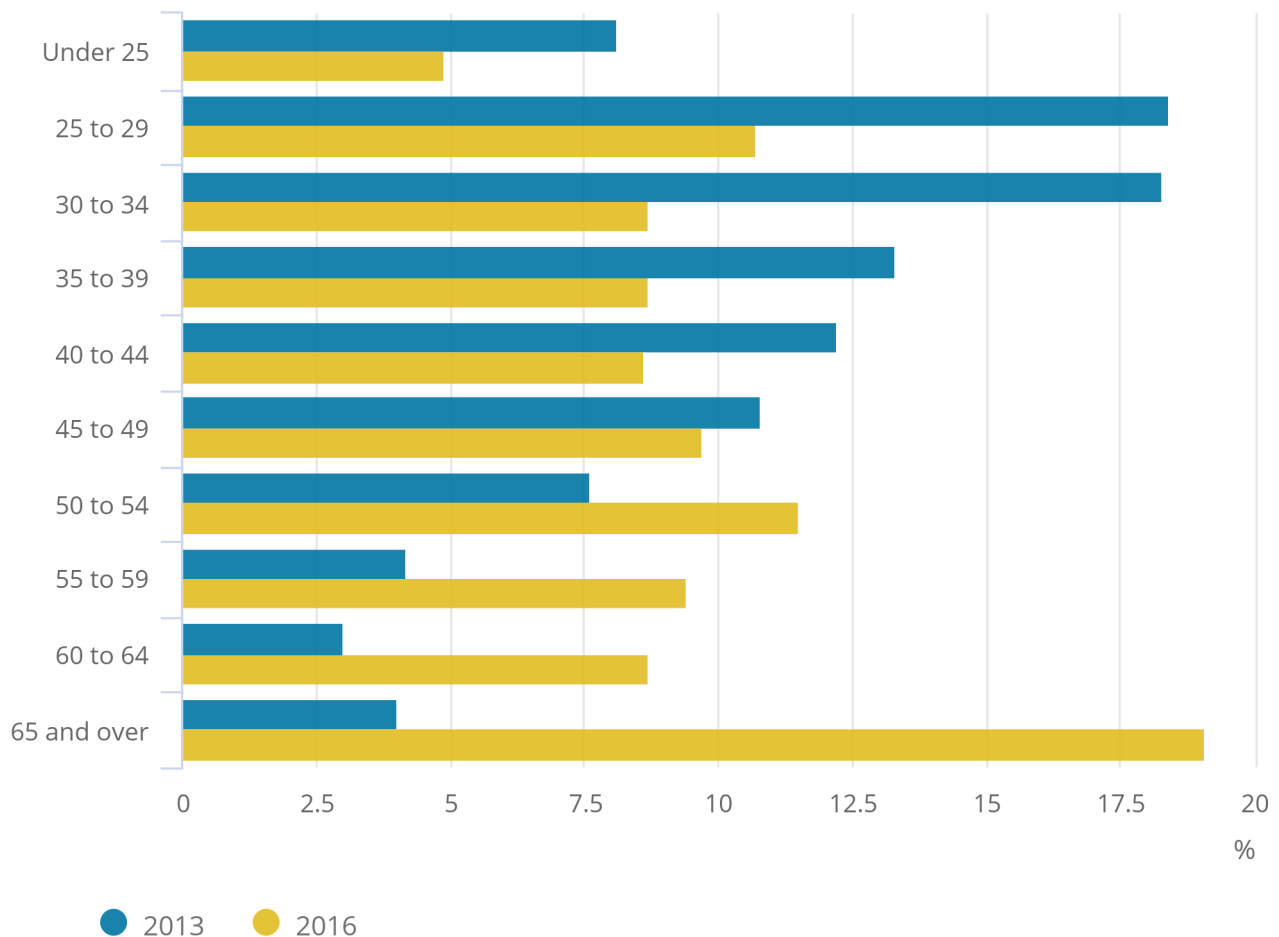
The age distribution of those forming civil partnerships has changed since the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples in 2014. Almost half (49%) of those entering a civil partnership in 2016 were aged 50 and over, up from 48% in 2015. Prior to the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples this figure was only 19% (2013) (Figure 3). There has also been a noticeable increase in the percentage of individuals forming a civil partnership at ages 65 and over (19% in 2016 compared with 4.0% in 2013).

Figure 3: Age distribution of individuals forming a civil partnership, 2013 and 2016

England and Wales

Figure 3: Age distribution of individuals forming a civil partnership, 2013 and 2016

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

The increased percentage of civil partnerships formed by those aged 50 and over has resulted in a rise in the average (mean) age at civil partnership formation.

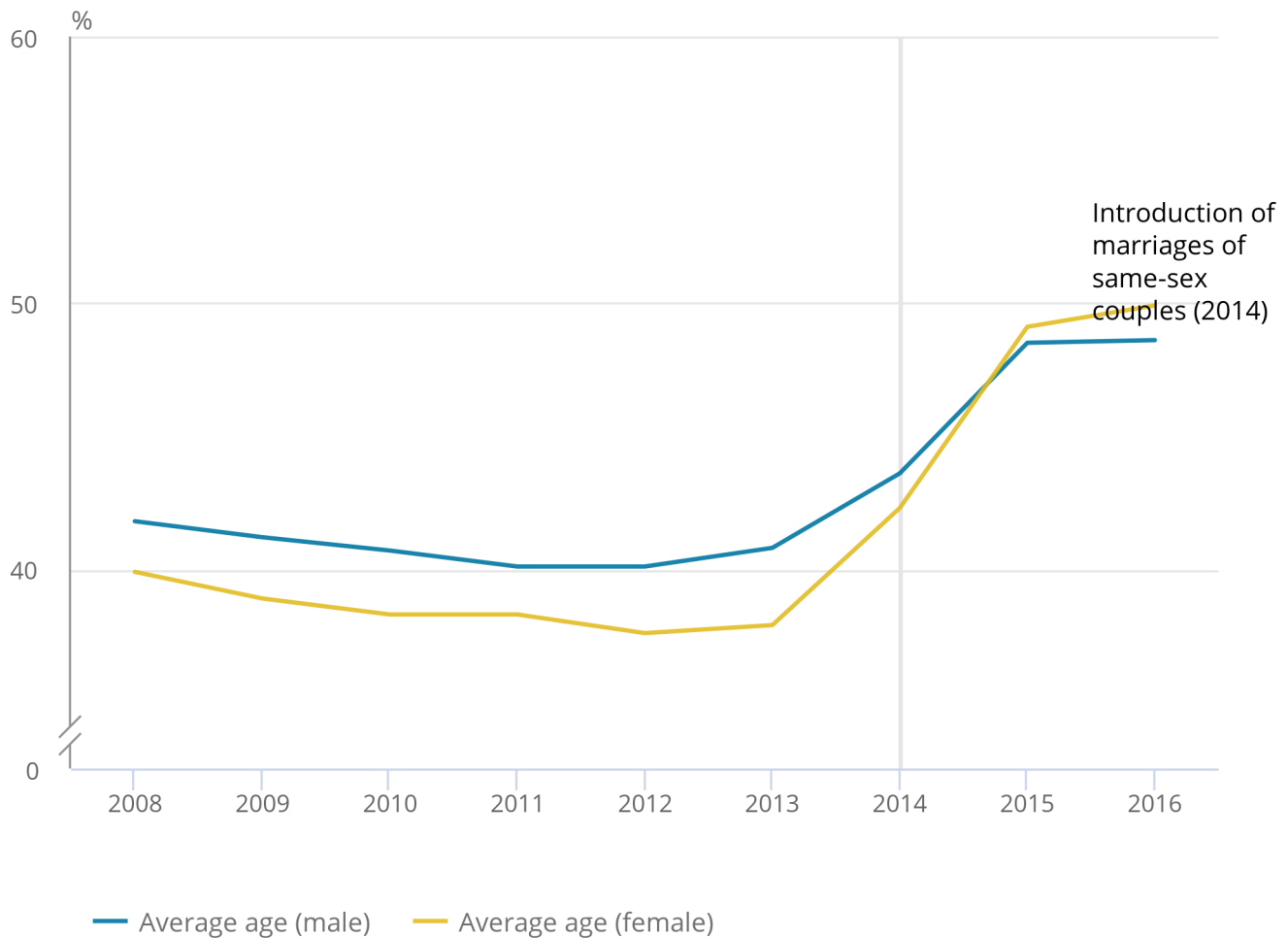
In 2016, for the second consecutive year, the average age of women forming a civil partnership (49.9 years) was higher than men (48.6 years). The difference between the average age at civil partnership formation for men and women has also increased in 2016 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Average (mean) age of men and women forming a civil partnership, 2008 to 2016

England and Wales

Figure 4: Average (mean) age of men and women forming a civil partnership, 2008 to 2016

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Source: Office for National Statistics

6 . London continued to be the most popular place to form a civil partnership

London continued to be the most popular region in England in which to form a civil partnership in 2016; of all formations in England and Wales 38% occurred in London. This compares with 34% in 2015 and 31% in 2014.

More men than women formed civil partnerships in each region of England in 2016, except in Yorkshire and The Humber and the East Midlands; here a higher number of women than men formed civil partnerships. In Wales, more men than women formed a civil partnership in 2016.

Brighton and Hove continued to hold the highest number of civil partnership formations for a local authority in England, with 38 in 2016 (29 male and 9 female). Islington (30 male and 4 female) and Southwark (26 male and 7 female) were second and third respectively. The unitary authority in Wales with the highest number of civil partnership formations was Cardiff, with 11 in 2016 (8 male and 3 female).

See Table 3 in [Civil Partnership Formations in England and Wales](#) for more figures by area of occurrence.

7 . Civil partnership dissolutions continue to rise

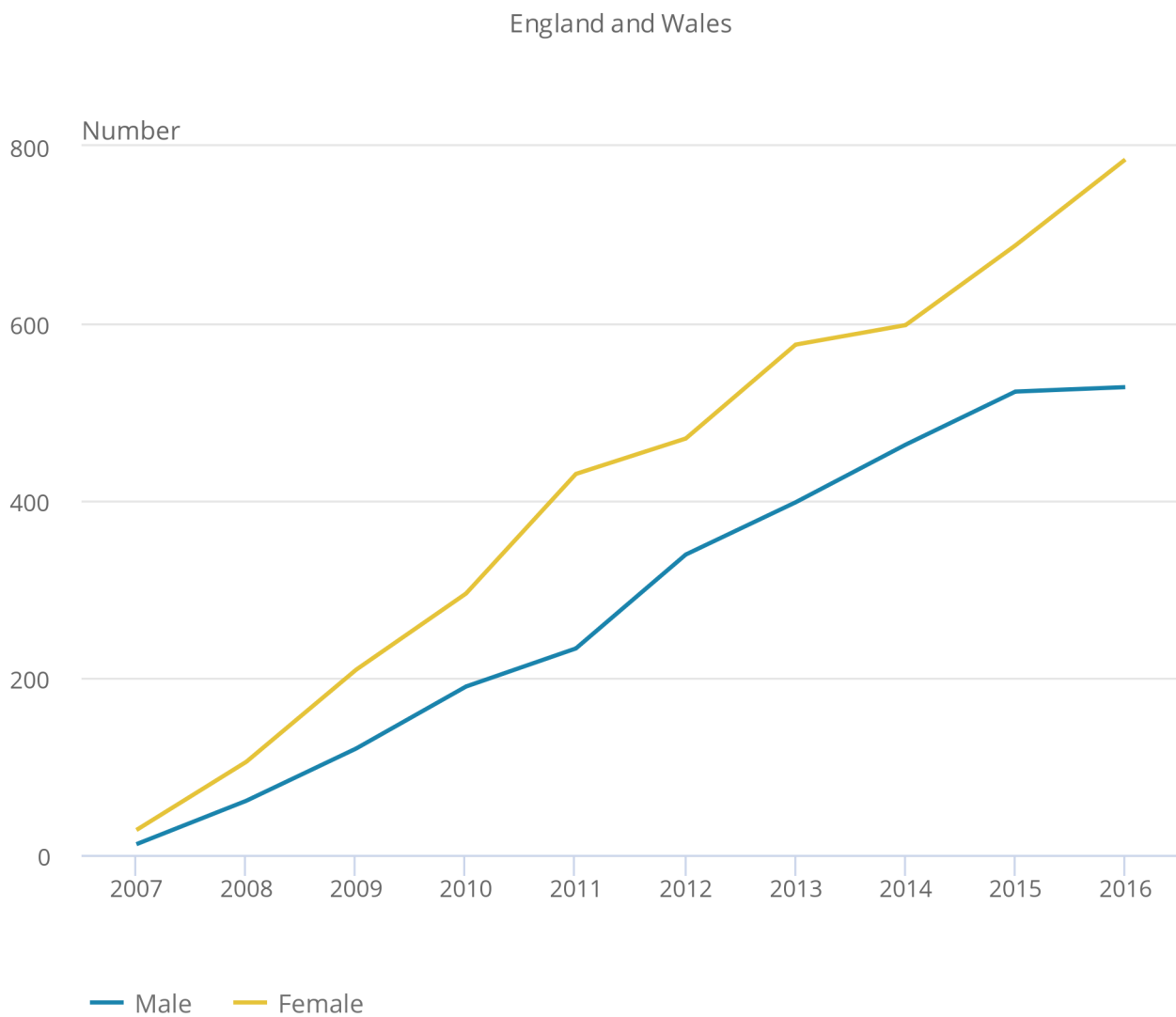
There were 1,313 civil partnership dissolutions granted in England and Wales in 2016, compared with 1,211 in 2015; an increase of 8.4%. Female couples accounted for 60% of all dissolutions in 2016.

Since civil partnership dissolutions were first recorded in 2007, more civil partnership dissolutions have occurred between female than male couples (Figure 5). This is despite the fact that historically a greater number of men have formed civil partnerships (Figure 2).

Figure 5: Civil partnership dissolutions by sex, 2007 to 2016

England and Wales

Figure 5: Civil partnership dissolutions by sex, 2007 to 2016



Source: Office for National Statistics

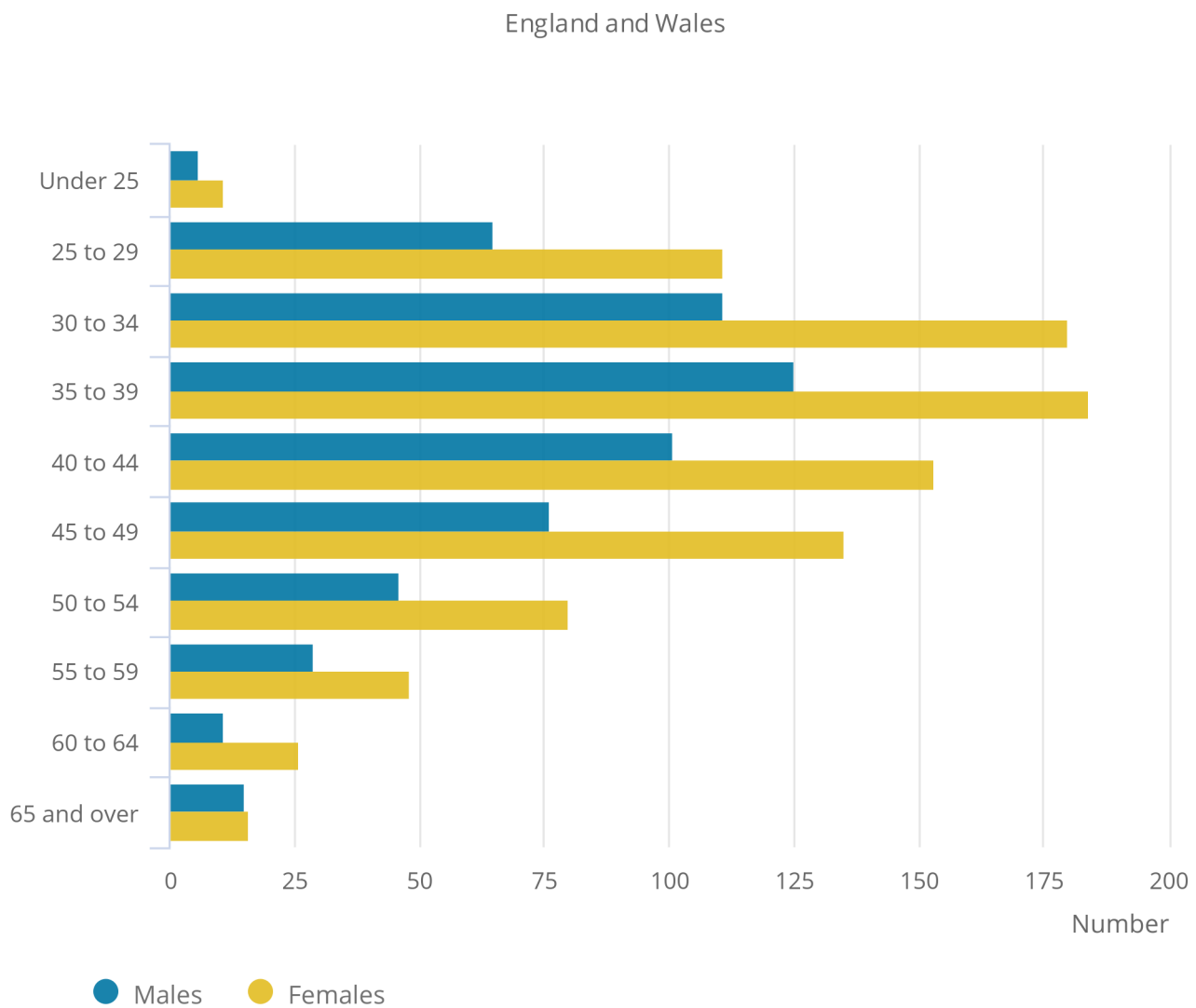
Source: Office for National Statistics

The rising number of dissolutions since 2007 is partly a consequence of the increase in the number of civil partners living in England and Wales following the introduction of civil partnerships.

Figure 6: Civil partnership dissolutions by age and sex, 2016

England and Wales

Figure 6: Civil partnership dissolutions by age and sex, 2016



Source: Office for National Statistics

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Figures by age will not sum to the total number of civil partnerships. In 2016, 42% of individuals had no age recorded on the civil partnership dissolution record; this has increased notably from 11% in 2013. We are working with the courts to improve this.

At all ages, more women than men dissolved their civil partnership in 2016 (Figure 6).

The average (mean) age at which civil partnerships are dissolved has increased gradually since 2010 when it was 38.3 years, reaching 40.9 years in 2016. The average age of men and women dissolving a civil partnership in 2016 was similar at 41.0 years and 40.9 years respectively.

8 . 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 the opportunity for those in a civil partnership to convert that relationship to a marriage if they choose to do so and provisions that 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 (GEO) considers that it is too early to fully evaluate the impact of the introduction of marriage for same-sex couples on civil partnerships – more years of data are required. GEO will therefore continue to monitor the number of civil partnership formations taking place in England and Wales.

9 . Links to related statistics

Further statistics on civil partnership [formations](#) and [dissolutions](#), [marriages](#), [families and households](#), and [population estimates by marital status](#) are available.

The number of civil partnership formations and dissolutions for the UK and constituent countries can be found in the [Vital Statistics: Population and Health Reference tables](#). The tables also provide civil partnership formation and dissolution rates for England and Wales as a whole.

Special extracts and tabulations of civil partnership data for England and Wales are available to order (subject to legal frameworks, disclosure control, resources and the [ONS charging policy](#), where appropriate). Enquiries should be made to Vital Statistics Outputs Branch via email to vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone on +44 (0) 1329 444110. User requested data will be made publicly available.

10 . Quality and methodology

This is the first time that 2016 civil partnership statistics for England and Wales have been published.

1. Civil partnerships formed in England and Wales in 2016 but received by ONS after 8 May 2017 are not included in this bulletin.
2. Civil partnership statistics are compiled to enable the analysis of social and demographic trends. They are also used for considering and monitoring policy changes.
3. The [Civil Partnerships Quality and Methodology Information](#) report contains important information on:
 - the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data
 - uses and users of the data
 - how the output was created
 - the quality of the output: including the accuracy of the data
4. Civil partnership statistics are comparable between countries within the UK; more information on comparability is available in our [Civil Partnerships Quality and Methodology Information](#).
5. [Revisions policies for population statistics \(including civil partnership statistics\)](#) are available.
6. The average (mean) age at civil partnership formation and dissolution is the sum of all age values (age last birthday) divided by the total number of values. For formations, the average age is based on exact age, while for dissolutions the average age is based on age last birthday. For this reason, the average age at dissolution calculation assumes that the ages are evenly spread between successive single years of age.