

Statistical bulletin

Civil partnerships in England and Wales: 2022

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



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1 . Main points

- There were 6,879 civil partnerships formed in England and Wales in 2022, a small increase (2.2%) from 2021.
- Of all civil partnerships formed in 2022, most (83.7%) were opposite-sex couples (5,760), with same-sex couples accounting for 16.3% (1,119); 58.2% of same-sex formations were male couples and 41.8% were female couples.
- The most common age for people forming a same-sex civil partnership in 2022 was those aged 25 to 34 years (21.0%), whereas the most common age for people forming an opposite-sex partnership was those aged 55 to 64 years (25.1%).
- Opposite-sex couples forming a civil partnership were over four times as likely to each have been in either a marriage or civil partnership previously (21.2%) compared with same-sex couples (4.7%).
- The areas with the most civil partnership registrations in England and Wales in 2022 were London (22.9%) and the South East (20.4%); this will reflect the population size and age structure of all regions.

2 . Number of civil partnerships

There were 6,879 civil partnerships formed in England and Wales in 2022. This is a 2.2% increase from 2021 (6,731 formations). Of the civil partnerships formed in 2022, 16.3% (1,119) were between same-sex couples and 83.7% (5,760) were between opposite-sex couples.

The percentage of same-sex civil partnership formations that were between male couples has consistently remained higher than females since 2014. Male couples accounted for 58.2% of same-sex civil partnerships formed in 2022, while female couples accounted for 41.8%. This is a slight increase in the percentage of male couples in comparison with 2021 (56.9%). This is in contrast with marriages of same-sex couples in 2020, the most recent data published on marriages, where there were more female couples (57.2%) than male couples marrying. For more information, see our [Marriages in England and Wales: 2020 bulletin](#).

Opposite-sex civil partnership formations were introduced for the first time in December 2019. Despite restrictions during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in 2020 and 2021, the number of opposite-sex civil partnerships in 2022 (5,760) is lower than 2020 (7,566). This is a similar trend seen following the introduction of same-sex civil partnerships in December 2005.

The highest number of same-sex civil partnership formations was in 2006 with 14,943 formations. The number of same-sex civil partnership formations fell after the introduction of same-sex marriages in 2014 and, with the exception of 2020, has been around 1,000 each year since.

Combining available civil partnership formations over a 10-year period (same-sex couples) and a 3-year period (opposite-sex couples), July to October are the most popular months to form a civil partnership in England and Wales. Coronavirus pandemic restrictions may affect the month of civil partnership formation in these data, in particular the 3 years for opposite-sex couples.

The most popular month for same-sex formations was August with 10.9%, and September for opposite-sex couples with 12.1%. Both had the least formations in January, with 6.2% for same-sex couples and 5.4% for opposite-sex couples. A similar pattern is seen for marriages. In 2019, prior to the coronavirus pandemic, August was the most popular month to get married (15.9%) and January was the least popular month (2.8%).

Across the same 10-year and 3-year periods, the distribution of civil partnership formations throughout a year is similar for England and Wales. Wales has additional peaks in March (10.0%) and May (9.5%) for same-sex couples compared with 8.1% and 8.9%, respectively, for England. For opposite-sex couples there was a peak in February for Wales with 10.4%, compared with 8.2% for England.

3 . Age of civil partners

The median age of people forming a same-sex civil partnership in 2022 was 50.6 years for males and 45.9 years for females. This is an increase of 1.5 and 3.2 years, respectively, compared with 2021.

People entering opposite-sex civil partnerships tend to have a higher median age at formation compared with same-sex couples: 55.9 years for males and 53.3 years for females in 2022. This was an increase of 0.7 years for males and 0.5 years for females compared with 2021.

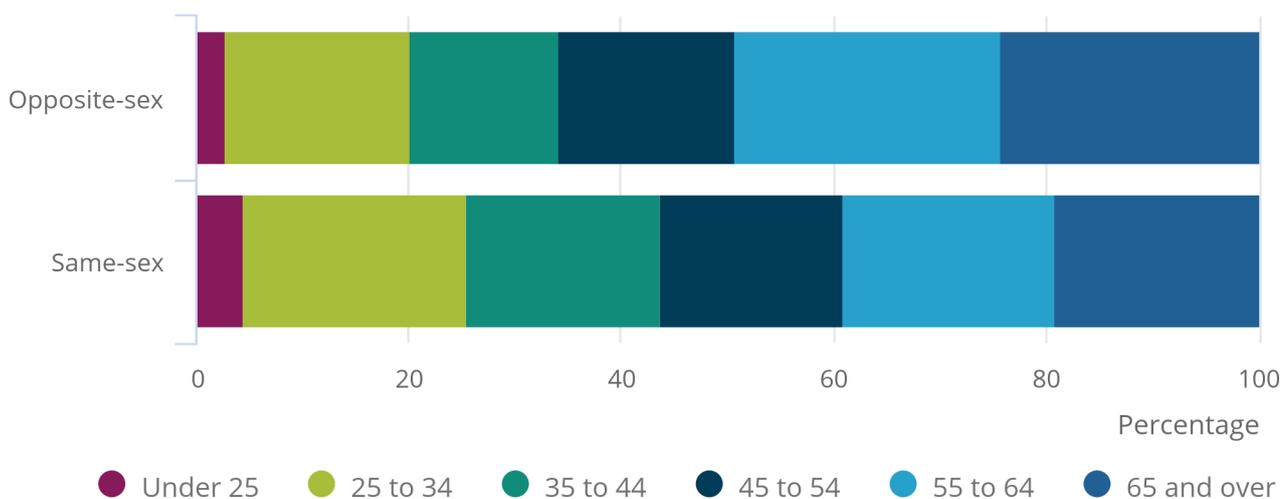
Figure 1 shows the percentage of people forming civil partnerships in England and Wales by age group. The age distributions for civil partnership formations are affected by the length of time they have been available in England and Wales (since December 2005 for same-sex couples and December 2019 for opposite-sex couples), and might partly reflect opposite-sex couples, potentially in long-standing relationships, taking the relatively new opportunity to legally register their union as an alternative to marriage.

Figure 1: Nearly a quarter of people entering opposite-sex civil partnerships in 2022 were aged 65 years and over, an older age profile than those forming same-sex civil partnerships

Percentage of civil partners by age, England and Wales, 2022

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Percentage of civil partners by age, England and Wales, 2022



Source: Civil partnerships in England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

For same-sex couples in 2022, the most common age group at formation was those aged 25 to 34 years (21.0%), and the least common age group was those aged under 25 years (4.4%). For opposite-sex couples, the most common age group was those aged 55 to 64 years (25.1%), and the least common group was also those aged under 25 years (2.8%).

Almost half (49.2%) of people forming a civil partnership with someone of the opposite sex were aged 55 years or over in 2022, with 24.2% aged 65 years or over. These are higher proportions than seen for same-sex couples in 2022, where 39.0% were aged 55 years or over and 19.0% were aged 65 years or over.

4 . Previous legal partnership status

The most common previous legal partnership status for people forming a civil partnership in 2022 was never married or civil partnered (69.7%), followed by divorced or previous civil partnership dissolved (27.9%) and widowed or surviving civil partner (2.4%).

People entering into an opposite-sex civil partnership in 2022 were twice as likely to have previously been divorced or have dissolved a civil partnership (30.5%) compared with same-sex couples (14.8%).

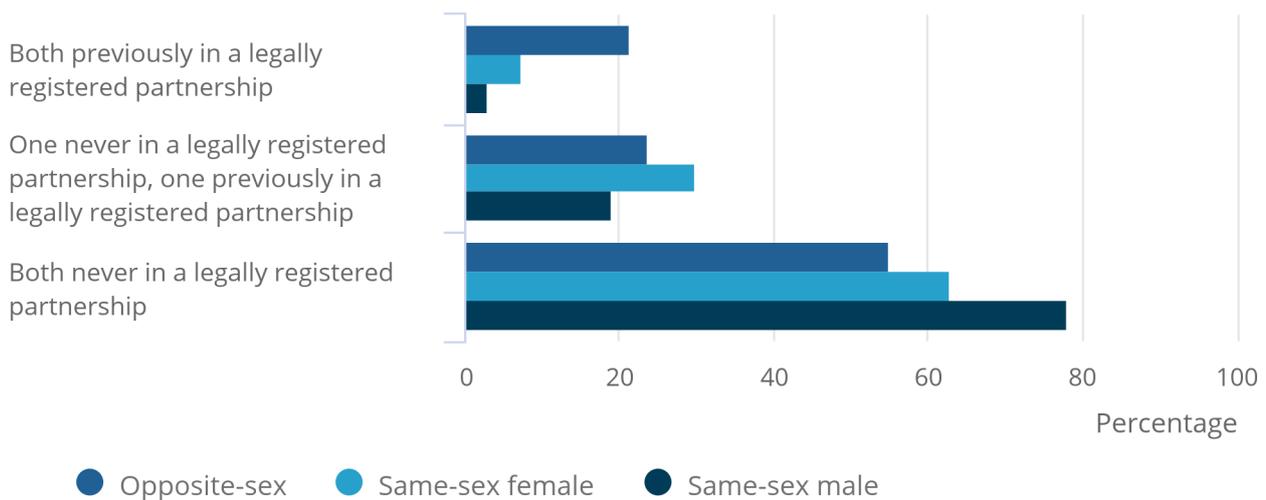
Males entering into same-sex civil partnerships were more likely (87.6%) to have never been married or civil partnered compared with females (77.9%).

Figure 2: Most couples entering into a civil partnership in 2022 had both never been in a legally registered partnership

Percentage of civil partnerships by previous partnership status, England and Wales, 2022

Figure 2: Most couples entering into a civil partnership in 2022 had both never been in a legally registered partnership

Percentage of civil partnerships by previous partnership status, England and Wales, 2022



Source: Civil partnerships in England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

Figure 2 shows that, almost 8 out of 10 (78.2%) civil partnership formations between male same-sex couples were between partners who had both never been in a legally registered partnership. This compares with just over 6 out of 10 (63.0%) female same-sex couples and just over half of all opposite-sex couples (55.1%). Female same-sex couples were the most likely to have one partner who had previously been in a legal partnership and one that had not (29.7%).

Opposite-sex couples were over four times as likely to have both previously been in a legally registered partnership (one in five couples or 21.2%) compared with same-sex couples (4.7%). This may reflect that legal partnerships for same-sex couples have only been available since 2005.

5 . Area of civil partnership formation

Of all civil partnership formations which took place in England and Wales in 2022, 57.6% (3,961 formations) were registered in the South East, South West or London. The lowest percentage of civil partnership formations were registered in the North East (2.2%) and Wales (4.0%).

Figure 3 shows the number of civil partnership formations which occurred in England and Wales in 2022 by registration district. The most common areas for formations were Inner London (1,057), followed by Outer London (515) and Greater Manchester (Met County) (235).

The geographic distribution of civil partnership formations will partly reflect the population size and age structure of registration districts.

Figure 3: London and the South East were the regions with the most civil partnership formations in 2022, the North East had the fewest

Number of civil partnerships by registration district, England and Wales, 2022

Notes:

1. The figure shows the total number of civil partnerships in an area and does not take population size and age profile into account.

Most regions had more male same-sex couples than female same-sex couples forming civil partnerships in 2022 in line with England and Wales as a whole, apart from the North East (43.5% males), Yorkshire and the Humber (35.3% males) and the West Midlands (41.2%).

6 . Civil partnerships in England and Wales data

[Civil partnership formations](#)

Dataset | Released 29 February 2024

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

7 . Glossary

Civil partnership

A civil partnership is a legally registered 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 Act 2004

The [Civil Partnership Act 2004](#) was introduced for the whole of the UK, making same-sex civil partnership statistics across the UK countries comparable. The [Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths \(Registration etc\) Act 2019](#) has also enabled opposite-sex couples to form civil partnerships across all countries of the UK. For more information on comparability across the UK and the different legislative changes, see our [Civil partnerships in England and Wales Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#).

8 . Measuring the data

Civil partnership formation statistics are derived from information recorded when civil partnerships are legally registered as part of civil registration. The General Register Office (GRO) maintains the records.

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.

Quality

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

9 . Strengths and limitations

Coverage of annual civil partnership statistics was altered from UK to England and Wales only from the 2014 data year onwards following a consultation exercise in February 2015. This has led to more timely final statistics for England and Wales. Summary figures for the UK continue to be published in our [Vital statistics in the UK: births, deaths and marriages dataset](#).

Summary tables have been extended to provide statistics on civil partnership formations of opposite-sex couples from the 2019 data year, following the introduction of civil partnerships of opposite-sex couples on 31 December 2019.

10 . Related links

[Civil partnership formation statistics for Scotland](#)

Web page | Released 20 July 2023

Marriage and civil partnership formation statistics for Scotland for 2022 and earlier years.

[Civil partnership statistics for Northern Ireland](#)

Web page | Released 26 October 2023

Civil partnership formation and dissolution statistics for Northern Ireland for 2022 and earlier years.

[Marriage and civil partnership status, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Article | Released 22 February 2023

Census 2021 analysis which details people's legal partnership status in England and Wales.

[Population estimates by marital status and living arrangements, England and Wales: 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 25 January 2024

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

[Civil partnership dissolutions](#)

Dataset | Released 22 February 2024

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

[Divorces in England and Wales: 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 22 February 2024

Annual divorce and civil partnership dissolution numbers and rates, partnership type, to whom granted and duration of marriage.

11 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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