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Department:  
Statistics South Africa  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

# Marriages and divorces

## Metadata

# 2023

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**IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH DATA ECOSYSTEMS**



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## Marriages and divorces, 2023

The data for marriages and divorces are in two separate files. The files are in flat ASCII, fixed format, with one line of given length per record. This format was chosen so as to make the data usable with as many statistical programs as possible, and thus accessible to as wide a range of people.

Other important information can be found in the following:

- ❖ Record layouts
  - civil marriages
  - customary marriages
  - civil unions
  - divorces
- ❖ Divorce Form (Form 07- 04)
- ❖ Marriages and divorces 2023 statistical release (P0307)
- ❖ Marriages and divorces 2023 CD
- ❖ Stats SA's website: [www.statssa.gov.za](http://www.statssa.gov.za)

## The data files

Each file contains the following information for each variable:

### Description of variables

**Descriptive name:** This is a short description of the variable with the variable name in brackets.

**Position of the variable:** The position of a variable within a record is recorded in the format (@xxx y.). "@xxx" indicates the position that the variable starts at (i.e. column) xxx, and "y" indicates the length of the field. Variables are either numeric or character.

**Code list:** The range of valid values for variables is as expected from the form. For continuous variables it only reflects the upper and lower limits.

**Missing value:** The code for "missing"/"unspecified" values is given for each variable.

**Note to users:** Additional information for further clarity on questions.

**Final code list:** The range of valid values for variables after editing the file. For continuous variables it only reflects the upper and lower limits.

## **Legislations covering registration of marriages, civil unions and divorces**

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) publishes marriage data on citizens and permanent residents that are collected through the national civil registration systems. Data in Statistics South Africa's *Marriages and divorces*, statistical release P0307, are based only on registered marriages and divorces that are stipulated and governed by the country's legal frameworks. The management of registered marriages is the responsibility of the Department of Home Affairs (DHA).

Two main legislations cover the registration of civil marriages and customary marriages. Civil marriages are administered through the Marriage Act, 1961 (Act No. 25 of 1961). Customary marriages are governed by the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, 1998 (Act No. 120 of 1998) that came into effect on 15 November 2000. An additional legislation is the registration of civil unions that is covered by the Civil Union Act, 2006 (Act No. 17 of 2006) that came into operation on 30 November 2006.

The dissolution of registered marriages and civil unions falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD) and Office of the Chief Justice (OCJ). This responsibility of the department is mandated through the Divorce Act, 1979 as amended, and its associated regulations (Act No.70 of 1979) and the Jurisdiction of Regional Courts Amendment Act, 2008 (Act No. 31 of 2008) as amended which came into effect on 9 August 2010.

In addition to the above legislations, The Statistics Act, 1999 (Act No. 6 of 1999) prohibits the disclosure of information regarding individuals to any person concerned or the person's lawful representative, thus providing confidentiality to the marriages, civil unions and the divorces data.

## **Methodology for civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions**

After the solemnisation ceremony of a marriage or a civil union, the marriage officer submits the marriage/civil union register to the nearest office of the DHA, where the marriage/civil union details are recorded in the National Population Register (NPR). With respect to customary marriages, the two spouses and their witnesses present themselves at a DHA office in order to register a customary marriage. Hence, the province of registration of marriages and unions is not necessarily the province of the place of usual residence of the couple since the registration of the marriage can take place at any DHA office.

The target population is all civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions recorded in the National Population Register in 2023 by the Department of Home Affairs.

Statistics South Africa requests electronic data on marriages and civil unions from DHA head office. Data on civil marriages, customary marriages and civil unions are received as three separate ASCII files. The three data sets are processed and analysed separately. The results are also published separately under the *Marriages* section of the *Marriages and divorces* release.

## DATA FILE: CIVIL MARRIAGES

*Name of Province (ProvinceCode)*

(@1 2.)

<b>1.</b>	<b>Province</b> 01 = Western Cape 02 = Eastern Cape 03 = Northern Cape 04 = Free State 05 = KwaZulu-Natal 06 = North West 07 = Gauteng 08 = Mpumalanga 09 = Limpopo
-----------	--

### Note to users

The variable provides information about the name of the province where the marriage was registered.

### Final code list

01 = Western Cape  
02 = Eastern Cape  
03 = Northern Cape  
04 = Free State  
05 = KwaZulu-Natal  
06 = North West  
07 = Gauteng  
08 = Mpumalanga  
09 = Limpopo  
98 = Outside RSA  
99 = Unspecified

*Month of Marriage (MarriageMonth)*

(@3 2.)

<b>2.</b>	<b>Marriage Month</b> 01 = January 02 = February 03 = March 04 = April 05 = May 06 = June 07 = July 08 = August 09 = September 10 = October 11 = November 12 = December
-----------	---

### Note to users

The variable provides information about the month in which the marriage was registered.

### Final code list

01 = January  
02 = February  
03 = March

04 = April  
 05 = May  
 06 = June  
 07 = July  
 08 = August  
 09 = September  
 10 = October  
 11 = November  
 12 = December

*Year of Marriage (MarriageYear)*

(@5 4.)

<b>3.</b>	<b>Marriage Year</b>
-----------	----------------------

Note to users

The variable provides information about the year in which the marriage was registered.

Final code list

Valid code = 2023

*Way of Solemnisation (SolemnisationCode)*

(@9 1.)

<b>4.</b>	<b>Solemnisation</b> 1 = Religious 2 = DHA
-----------	--

Note to users

The variable provides information about the way the marriage was solemnised.

Final code list

1 = Religious

2 = DHA

9 = Unspecified

*Marital status of Bridegroom (BridegroomStatusCode)*

(@10 1.)

<b>5.</b>	<b>Bridegroom Status</b> 1 = Never married 2 = Divorcee 3 = Widower
-----------	--

Note to users

The variable provides information about the marital status of the bridegroom before marriage.

Final code list

1 = Never married

2 = Divorcee

3 = Widower

9 = Unspecified

*Marital status of Bride (BrideStatusCode)*

(@11 1.)

<b>6.</b>	<b>Bride Status</b> 1 = Never married 2 = Divorcee 3 = Widow
-----------	---

**Note to users**

The variable provides information about the marital status of the bride before the current marriage.

**Final code list**

1 = Never married  
2 = Divorcee  
3 = Widow  
9 = Unspecified

*Age of Bridegroom (BridegroomAge)*

(@12 2.)

<b>7.</b>	<b>Bridegroom's Age</b>
-----------	-------------------------

**Note to users**

The variable provides information about the age of the bridegroom at the time of marriage.

**Final code list**

Valid range: 16–98

*Age of Bride (BrideAge)*

(@14 2.)

<b>8.</b>	<b>Bride's Age</b>
-----------	--------------------

**Note to users**

The variable provides information about the age of the bride at the time of marriage.

**Final code list**

Valid range: 14–92

*Age difference between bridegroom and bride (AgeDiff)*

(@16 1.)

<b>9.</b>	<b>Age difference between the couple (Derived variable)</b>
-----------	---

**Note to users**

The variable is derived from the difference between the *BridegroomAge* and the *BrideAge*. It provides information on the age difference between the bridegroom and the bride.

**Final code list**

0 = Spouses same age  
1 = Bridegroom older  
2 = Bridegroom younger

## DATA FILE: CUSTOMARY MARRIAGES

*Name of Province (ProvinceCode)*

(@1 2.)

<b>1.</b>	<b>Province</b> 01 = Western Cape 02 = Eastern Cape 03 = Northern Cape 04 = Free State 05 = KwaZulu-Natal 06 = North West 07 = Gauteng 08 = Mpumalanga 09 = Limpopo
-----------	--

### Note to users

The variable provides information about the name of the province where the marriage was registered.

### Final code list

01 = Western Cape  
02 = Eastern Cape  
03 = Northern Cape  
04 = Free State  
05 = KwaZulu-Natal  
06 = North West  
07 = Gauteng  
08 = Mpumalanga  
09 = Limpopo  
97 = Unknown  
98 = Outside RSA  
99 = Unspecified

*Year of Marriage (MarriageYear)*

(@3 4.)

<b>2.</b>	<b>Marriage Year</b>
-----------	----------------------

### Note to users

The question provides information about the year in which the customary marriage took place.

### Final code list

Valid code = 1944–2023

*Year of Registration (RegistrationYear)*

(@7 4.)

<b>3.</b>	<b>Registration Year</b>
-----------	--------------------------

### Note to users

The question provides information about the year in which a marriage was registered.

### Final code list

Valid code = 2023



*Age of Bridegroom (BridegroomAge)*

(@11 3.)

4.	<b>Bridegroom's Age</b>
----	-------------------------

**Note to users**

This provides information about the age of the husband at the time of marriage.

**Final code list**

Valid range: 13–90

Unspecified: 999

*Age of Bride (BrideAge)*

(@14 3.)

5.	<b>Bride's Age</b>
----	--------------------

**Note to users**

This provides information about the age of the bride at the time of marriage.

**Final code list**

Valid range: 10–86

Unspecified: 999

*Age difference between bridegroom and bride (AgeDiff)*

(@17 1.)

6.	<b>Age difference between the couple (Derived variable)</b>
----	---

**Note to users**

This is derived from the difference between the *BridegroomAge* and the *BrideAge*. It provides information on the age difference between bridegroom and bride.

**Final code list**

0 = Spouses same age

1 = Bridegroom older

2 = Bridegroom younger

9 = Unspecified

## DATA FILE: CIVIL UNIONS

*Name of Province (ProvinceCode)*

(@1 2.)

<b>1.</b>	<b>Province</b> 01 = Western Cape 02 = Eastern Cape 03 = Northern Cape 04 = Free State 05 = KwaZulu-Natal 06 = North West 07 = Gauteng 08 = Mpumalanga 09 = Limpopo
-----------	--

### Note to users

The question provides information about the name of the province where the civil union was registered.

### Final code list

01 = Western Cape  
02 = Eastern Cape  
03 = Northern Cape  
04 = Free State  
05 = KwaZulu-Natal  
06 = North West  
07 = Gauteng  
08 = Mpumalanga  
09 = Limpopo  
98 = Outside RSA  
99 = Unspecified

*Month of Marriage (MarriageMonth)*

(@3 2.)

<b>2.</b>	<b>Registration Month</b> 01 = January 02 = February 03 = March 04 = April 05 = May 06 = June 07 = July 08 = August 09 = September 10 = October 11 = November 12 = December
-----------	---

### Note to users

This variable provides information about the month in which the civil union was registered.

### Final code list

01 = January  
02 = February

03 = March  
 04 = April  
 05 = May  
 06 = June  
 07 = July  
 08 = August  
 09 = September  
 10 = October  
 11 = November  
 12 = December

*Year of Registration (RegistrationYear)*

(@5 4.)

3.	Registration Year
----	-------------------

#### Note to users

The variable provides information about the year in which the civil union was registered.

#### Final code list

Valid code = 2023

*Age of Spouse-1 (Spouse1Age)*

(@9 2.)

4.	Spouse-1Age
----	-------------

#### Note to users

This variable provides information about the age of spouse-1 at the time of union.

#### Final code list

Valid range: 19–87

*Age of Spouse-2 (Spouse2Age)*

(@11 2.)

5.	Spouse-2Age
----	-------------

#### Note to users

This variable provides information about the age of spouse-2 at the time of union.

#### Final code list

Valid range: 18–87

*Age difference between Spouse-1 and Spouse-2 (AgeDiff)*

(@13 1.)

6.	Age difference between the couple
----	-----------------------------------

#### Note to users

This variable is derived from the difference between *Spouse-1Age* and *Spouse-2Age*. It provides information on the age difference between spouse-1 and spouse-2.

#### Final code list

0 = Spouses same age  
 1 = Spouse-1 older  
 2 = Spouse-1 younger

## DATA FILE: DIVORCES

### Methodology

The divorce data are based on successful applications for divorce that have been issued with decrees. The data are collected from the courts that deal with divorce matters using a standard structured form prepared by Stats SA in collaboration with the DoJ&CD and OCJ. Once a decree of divorce is issued, the plaintiff completes the form and the registrar of the courts signs and stamps it. The forms are consolidated and regularly mailed to Stats SA's Head Office. At Stats SA, the forms are sorted and captured according to the court's name and calendar month. Similarly, the forms are stored in boxes according to the court's name and calendar month. A quality assurance of the captured data is done. The data are analysed and published under the divorces section of the release.

The target population is all divorce applications that were concluded in 2022 i.e. that were finalised and issued with decrees of divorce in 2022 by DoJ&CD and OCJ.

*Name of Province (ProvinceCode)*

(@1 2.)

<b>1.</b>	<b>Province</b> 01 = Western Cape 02 = Eastern Cape 03 = Northern Cape 04 = Free State 05 = KwaZulu-Natal 06 = North West 07 = Gauteng 08 = Mpumalanga 09 = Limpopo
-----------	--

Note to users

The question provides information about the name of the province where the divorce was issued.

Final code list

01 = Western Cape  
02 = Eastern Cape  
03 = Northern Cape  
04 = Free State  
05 = KwaZulu-Natal  
06 = North West  
07 = Gauteng  
08 = Mpumalanga  
09 = Limpopo

*Population group of husband (MaleRace)*

(@3 1.)

<b>2.</b>	<b>The population group of the husband</b> <input type="checkbox"/> = African/Black  <input type="checkbox"/> = Coloured  <input type="checkbox"/> = Indian/Asian  <input type="checkbox"/> = White  <input type="checkbox"/> = Other (Specify)
-----------	--

Note to users

The variable provides information about the population group of the husband.

Final code list  
 1 = Black African  
 2 = Coloured  
 3 = Indian/Asian  
 4 = White  
 5 = Other  
 9 = Unspecified

*Population group of wife (FemaleRace)*

(@4 1.)

<b>3.</b>	<b>The population group of the wife</b> <input type="checkbox"/> = African/Black  <input type="checkbox"/> = Coloured  <input type="checkbox"/> = Indian/Asian  <input type="checkbox"/> = White  <input type="checkbox"/> = Other (Specify)
-----------	---

Note to users

The variable provides information about the population group of the wife.

Final code list  
 1 = Black African  
 2 = Coloured  
 3 = Indian/Asian  
 4 = White  
 5 = Other  
 9 = Unspecified

*Population group of couple (CoupleRace)*

(@5 1.)

<b>4.</b>	<b>The population group of the couple (Derived variable)</b>
-----------	--

Note to users

The variable is derived by comparing *MaleRace* to *FemaleRace* to determine whether the divorcing couple is in a mixed-race marriage. If the population group of the husband and the population group of the wife differ, then the couple is classified as being in a mixed-race marriage.

Final code list  
 1 = Black African  
 2 = Coloured  
 3 = Indian/Asian  
 4 = White  
 5 = Mixed  
 9 = Unspecified

*Occupation of Husband (MaleOccupation)*

(@6 2.)

<b>5.</b>	<b>Husband's occupation at the time of divorce</b>
-----------	--

**Note to users**

The variable provides information about the occupation of the husband at the time of the divorce.

**Final code list**

- 00 = Unemployed
- 01 = Professional, semi-professional and technical occupations
- 02 = Managers and administrators
- 03 = Clerical and sales occupations
- 04 = Transport, delivery and communications
- 05 = Service occupations
- 06 = Farming and related occupations
- 07 = Artisans, apprentice and related occupations
- 08 = Production foreman, mine and quarry workers
- 99 = Unspecified

*Occupation of wife (FemaleOccupation)*

(@8 2.)

<b>6.</b>	<b>Wife's occupation at the time of divorce</b>
-----------	---

**Note to users**

The variable provides information about the occupation of the wife at the time of the divorce.

**Final code list**

- 00 = Unemployed
- 01 = Professional, semi-professional and technical occupations
- 02 = Managers and administrators
- 03 = Clerical and sales occupations
- 04 = Transport, delivery and communications
- 05 = Service occupations
- 06 = Farming and related occupations
- 07 = Artisans, apprentice and related occupations
- 08 = Production foreman, mine and quarry workers
- 99 = Unspecified

*Sex of plaintiff (PlaintiffSex)*

(@10 1.)

<b>7.</b>	<b>Sex of the plaintiff</b> <input type="checkbox"/> = Husband  <input type="checkbox"/> = Wife
-----------	--

**Note to users**

The variable provides information about the sex of the plaintiff. It seeks to find out who filed for the divorce – the husband, wife or both husband and wife.

Final code list  
 1 = Male  
 2 = Female  
 3 = Both  
 9 = Unspecified

*Marital status of husband (MaleStatus)*

(@11 1.)

<b>8.</b>	<b>Husband's marital status at the time of marriage</b>
	<input type="checkbox"/> = Never married
	<input type="checkbox"/> = Widower
	<input type="checkbox"/> = Divorcee

Note to users

The variable seeks to find out the husband's marital status at the time of marriage; of particular interest is whether the previous marriage ended in divorce if the husband was previously married.

Final code list  
 1 = Never married  
 2 = Widower  
 3 = Divorcee  
 9 = Unspecified

*Marital status of wife (FemaleStatus)*

(@12 1.)

<b>9.</b>	<b>Wife's marital status at the time of marriage</b>
	<input type="checkbox"/> = Never married
	<input type="checkbox"/> = Widow
	<input type="checkbox"/> = Divorcee

Note to users

The variable seeks to find out the wife's marital status at the time of marriage; of particular interest is whether the previous marriage ended in divorce if the wife was previously married.

Final code list  
 1 = Never married  
 2 = Widow  
 3 = Divorcee  
 9 = Unspecified

*Number of times husband married (MaleNoTimesMarried)*

(@13 2.)

<b>10.</b>	<b>Number of times husband has married</b>
------------	--

Note to users

The variable seeks to find out the number of times the husband has been married (including the current marriage).

Final code list

Valid range: 01–07

Unspecified = 99

Number of times wife married (*FemaleNoTimesMarried*)

(@15 2.)

11.	<b>Number of times wife has married</b>
-----	---

Note to users

The variable seeks to find out the number of times the wife has been married (including the current marriage).

Final code list

Valid range: 01–06

Unspecified = 99

Age of husband (*MaleAge*)

(@17 3.)

12.	<b>Age of husband</b>
-----	-----------------------

Note to users

The variable seeks to find out the age of the husband at the time of the divorce.

Final code list

Valid range: 20–94

Unspecified: 999

Age of wife (*FemaleAge*)

(@20 3.)

13.	<b>Age of wife</b>
-----	--------------------

Note to users

The variable seeks to find out the age of the wife at the time of the divorce.

Final code list

Valid range: 20–85

Unspecified: 999

Way of solemnisation (*SolemnisationCode*)

(@23 1.)

14.	<b>Type of solemnisation of the present marriage</b> <input type="checkbox"/> = Church <input type="checkbox"/> = Dept. of Home Affairs <input type="checkbox"/> = Magistrate's Office <input type="checkbox"/> = Mosque <input type="checkbox"/> = Synagogue <input type="checkbox"/> = Customary rites <input type="checkbox"/> = Other religious buildings <input type="checkbox"/> = Other
-----	---



#### Note to users

The variable seeks to find out how the current marriage was solemnised.

#### Final code list

- 1 = Religious
- 2 = DHA
- 9 = Unspecified

#### Matrimonial property system (MarriagePropertySystem)

(@24 1.)

<b>15.</b>	<b>Matrimonial property system</b> <input type="checkbox"/> = In community of property  <input type="checkbox"/> = Out of community of property  <input type="checkbox"/> = Out of community of property (excluding accrual system)  <input type="checkbox"/> = Out of community of property (including accrual system)  <input type="checkbox"/> = Other (Specify)
------------	--

#### Note to users

The variable seeks to find out the type of matrimonial property contract the couple entered into at the time of the current marriage being dissolved.

#### Final code list

- 1 = In community of property
- 2 = Out of community of property
- 3 = Out of community of property (excluding accrual system)
- 4 = Out of community of property (including accrual system)
- 9 = Unspecified

#### Month of marriage (MarriageMonth)

(@25 2.)

<b>16.</b>	<b>Marriage month</b> 01 = January 02 = February 03 = March 04 = April 05 = May 06 = June 07 = July 08 = August 09 = September 10 = October 11 = November 12 = December
------------	---

#### Note to users

The variable seeks to find out the month in which the marriage took place.

#### Final code list

- 01 = January
- 02 = February
- 03 = March
- 04 = April
- 05 = May

06 = June  
 07 = July  
 08 = August  
 09 = September  
 10 = October  
 11 = November  
 12 = December  
 99 = Unspecified

*Year of marriage (MarriageYear)*

(@27 4.)

<b>17.</b>	<b>Marriage Year</b>
------------	----------------------

Note to users

The variable provides information about the year in which the marriage was registered.

#### Final code list

Valid range: 1970–2023

Unspecified: 9999

*Number of minor children involved (NoOfChildren)*

(@31 2.)

<b>18.</b>	<b>Number of minor children involved</b>
------------	--

Note to users

The variable seeks to determine the number of minor children (under 18 years) out of this marriage (i.e. the current dissolving marriage).

#### Final code list

Valid range: 00–07

*Month of divorce (DivorceMonth)*

(@33 2.)

<b>19.</b>	<b>Divorce month</b>
	01 = January
	02 = February
	03 = March
	04 = April
	05 = May
	06 = June
	07 = July
	08 = August
	09 = September
	10 = October
	11 = November
	12 = December

Note to users

The information is completed by the registrar. The variable seeks to find out the month in which the decree was issued.

#### Final code list

01 = January  
 02 = February  
 03 = March  
 04 = April

05 = May  
 06 = June  
 07 = July  
 08 = August  
 09 = September  
 10 = October  
 11 = November  
 12 = December

Year of divorce (*DivorceYear*)

(@35 4.)

20.	Divorce year
-----	--------------

Note to users

The information is completed by the registrar. The variable seeks to find out the year in which the decree was issued.

#### Final code list

Valid code: 2023

Duration of marriage (*DurationOfMarriage*)

(@39 3.)

21.	Duration of marriage (Derived variable)
-----	---

Note to users

The variable is the difference between *MarriageYear* and *DivorceYear*. It seeks to determine the number of years a couple have been married.

#### Final code list

Valid range: 00–52

Unspecified: 999

Type of marriage (*MarriageType*)

(@42 1.)

22.	<b>Type of marriage</b> <input type="checkbox"/> = Civil marriage <input type="checkbox"/> = Customary marriage <input type="checkbox"/> = Civil union <input type="checkbox"/> = Other (Specify)
-----	---

Note to users

The variable seeks to find out the type of marriage the couple had entered into.

#### Final code list

1 = Civil marriage

2 = Customary marriage

3 = Civil union

9 = Unspecified

Involved in polygamous marriage (*PolygamousMarriage*)

(@43 1.)

<b>23.</b>	<b>Involved in polygamous marriage</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> = Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> = No
------------	---

Note to users

The variable seeks to find out whether the couples were involved in polygamous marriage or not.

**Final code list**

1 = Yes

2 = No

9 = Unspecified

Main grounds for divorce (*GroundsForDivorce*)

(@44 1.)

<b>24.</b>	<b>The main grounds for divorce</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> = Adultery  <input type="checkbox"/> = Desertion  <input type="checkbox"/> = Financial difficulties  <input type="checkbox"/> = Medical Insanity  <input type="checkbox"/> = Imprisonment  <input type="checkbox"/> = Abuse  <input type="checkbox"/> = Other (Specify)
------------	---

Note to users

The variable seeks to find the main cause of divorce between the couple.

**Final code list**

1 = Adultery

2 = Abuse

3 = Childlessness

4 = Desertion

5 = Financial difficulties

6 = Medical Insanity

7 = Imprisonment

9 = Unspecified