

Statistical bulletin

# Civil Partnerships in England and Wales: 2015

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



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# 1 . Main points

There were 861 civil partnerships formed in England and Wales in 2015, a fall of 49% from 1,683 in 2014.

Civil partnership formations have declined by 85% since 2013; this results from the introduction of marriages of same sex couples in March 2014.

Two-thirds (66%) of civil partnerships formed in 2015 were between men – the highest proportion since civil partnership formations were introduced in 2005.

Nearly half (48%) of all civil partners forming a partnership in 2015 were aged 50 and over; this compares with 19% in 2013 prior to the introduction of marriages of same sex couples.

The mean age at formation for civil partners has risen to 48.5 years for men and 49.1 for women, compared with 40.8 years for men and 37.9 for women in 2013.

There were 1,211 civil partnership dissolutions granted in 2015, a 14% increase compared with 2014.

By the end of 2015, 6.8% of male and 11.7% of female civil partnerships in England and Wales are estimated to have ended in dissolution.

## 2 . Statistician's quote

"Civil partnerships have fallen sharply since the introduction of marriages for same sex couples in March 2014. On the other hand, civil partnership dissolutions have increased due to the rising number of civil partnerships that were formed since they were introduced in December 2005. Dissolutions are likely to reduce in the future as more same sex couples form marriages instead of civil partnerships."

Elizabeth McLaren, Vital Statistics Outputs Branch, Office for National Statistics. Follow @StatsLiz on Twitter.

## 3 . Things you need to know

Important information for interpreting these statistics:

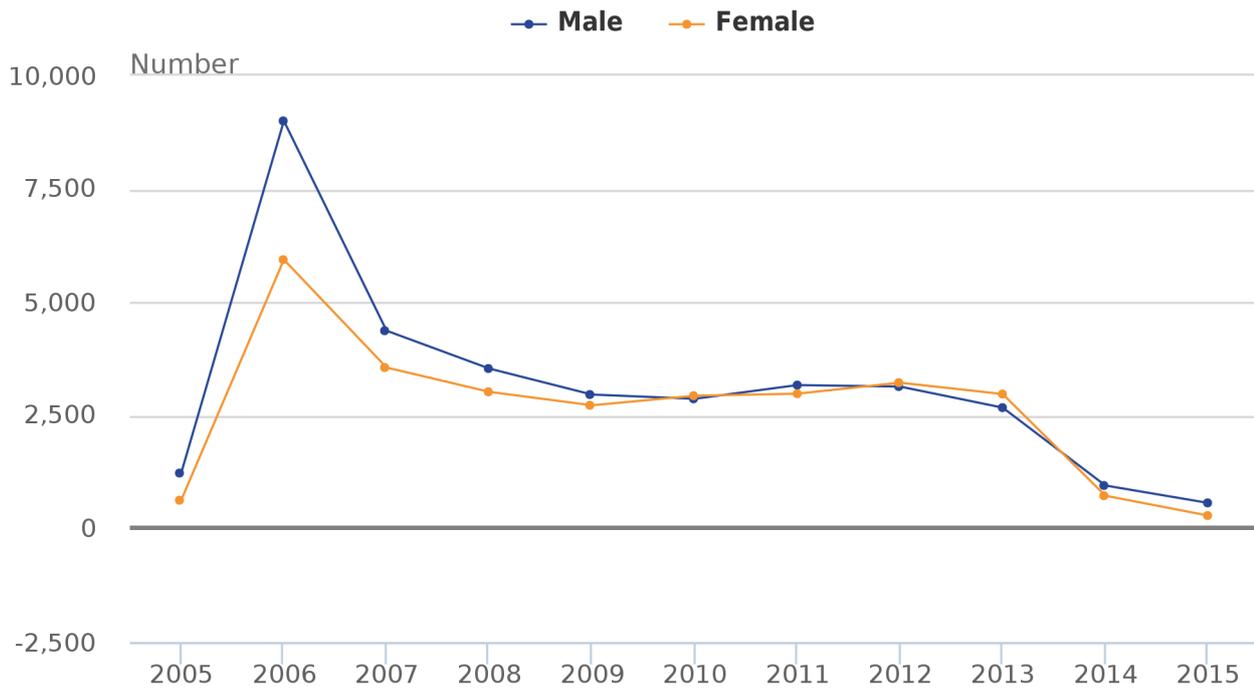
- civil partnership formation statistics are derived from information recorded when civil partnerships are registered as part of civil registration, a legal requirement
- figures represent civil partnerships which are formed in England and Wales only; civil partnership formations to residents of England and Wales which 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 1 of the parties had a permanent home in England and Wales
- statistics on [marriages of same sex couples](#) are published separately – figures will be included in our annual [Marriages in England and Wales](#) release for the 2014 data year onwards

## **4 . Fewer civil partnerships in 2015 as same sex couples choose to marry instead**

In 2015, the number of civil partnerships formed in England and Wales by same sex couples decreased to 861, from 1,683 in 2014 and 5,646 in 2013. This represents a decrease of 49% compared with 2014, and a decrease of 85% since 2013. These decreases result from the introduction of marriages of same sex couples in March 2014.

**Figure 1: Civil partnership formations by sex, 2005 to 2015**

England and Wales



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 be formed in England and Wales from 29 March 2014.

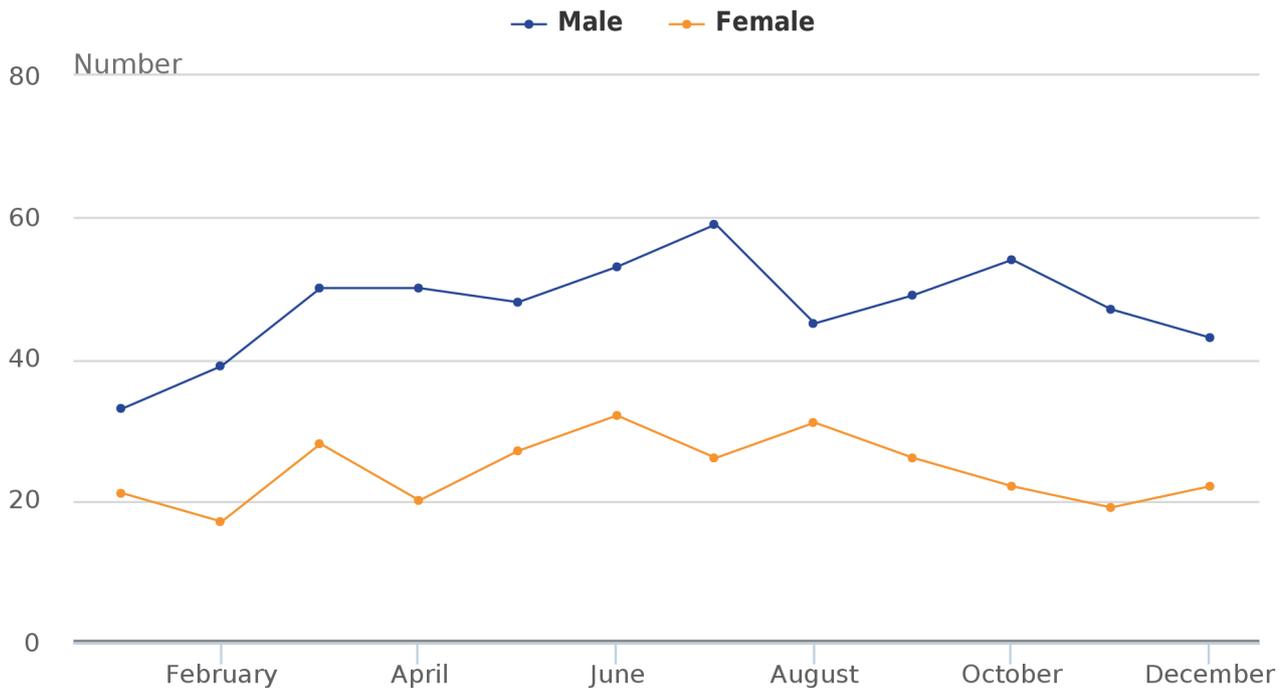
Two-thirds (66%) of civil partnerships formed in 2015 were between men – the highest proportion since civil partnerships were introduced in 2005. Initially, following their introduction, civil partnerships were more popular among men; 60% of all civil partnerships were between men in 2006. Between 2009 and 2013 however, the numbers of men and women forming civil partnerships was more even – the proportion of civil partnerships to men fluctuated between 47% and 52%.

In contrast, [provisional statistics on marriages of same sex couples](#) show that more female than male couples married between 29 March 2014 and 30 June 2015.

The number of civil partnerships formed each month in 2015 has fluctuated; there has been no obvious decline in the number of civil partnerships formations throughout 2015.

**Figure 2: Civil partnership formations by month and sex, 2015**

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

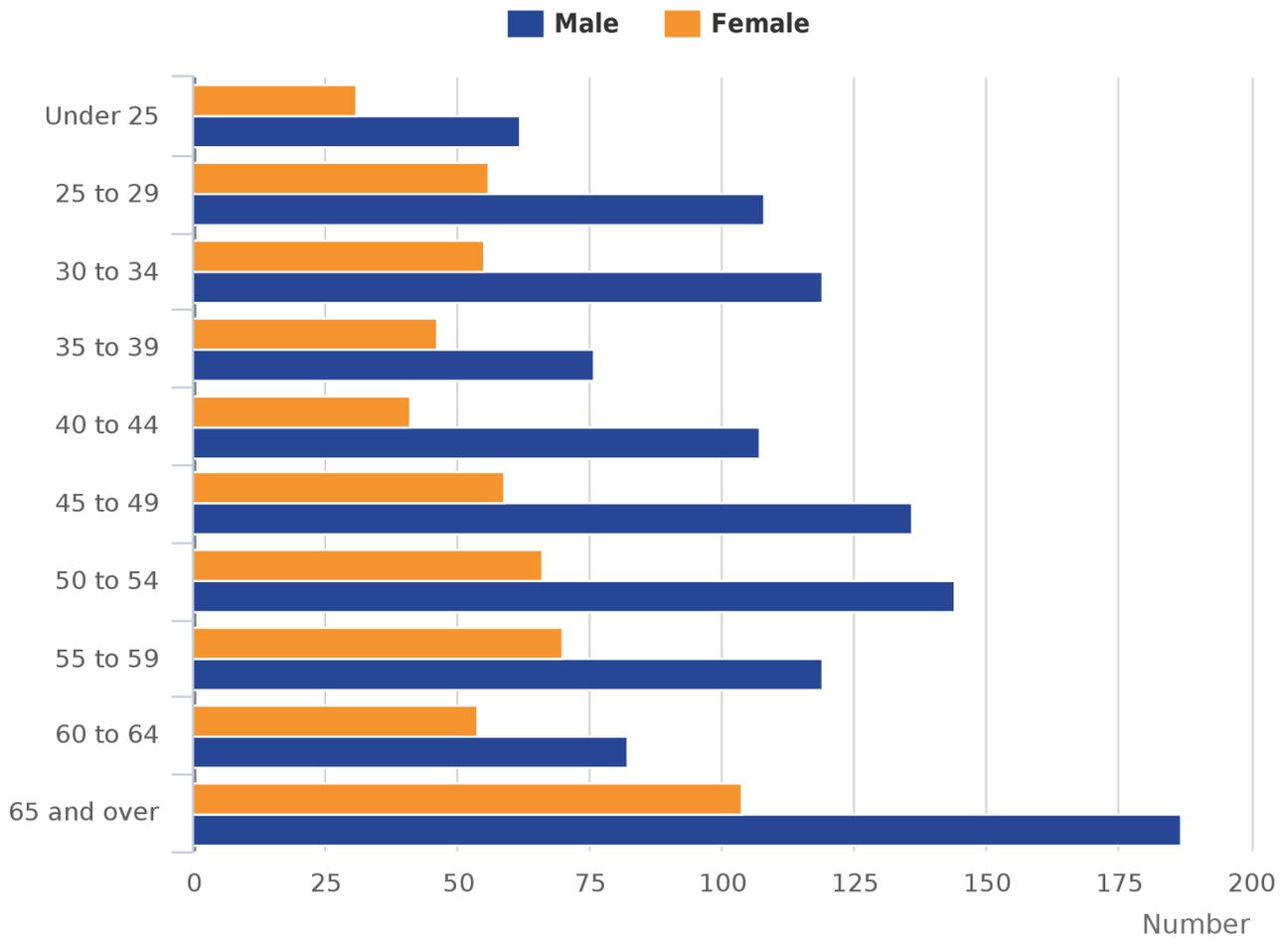
The seasonal trend of the summer months being the most popular time for civil partnership formations is now less notable.

## 5 . Most civil partnerships formed by those aged 50 and over

Following the introduction of marriages of same sex couples, the percentage of civil partnership formations taking place at older ages has increased. Almost half (48%) of all persons entering a civil partnership in 2015 were aged 50 and over. This compares with 19% in 2013, prior to the introduction of marriages of same sex couples. For the first time, the most popular age for men and women to form a civil partnership was 65 and over in 2015.

**Figure 3: Age of men and women forming a civil partnership in 2015**

England and Wales

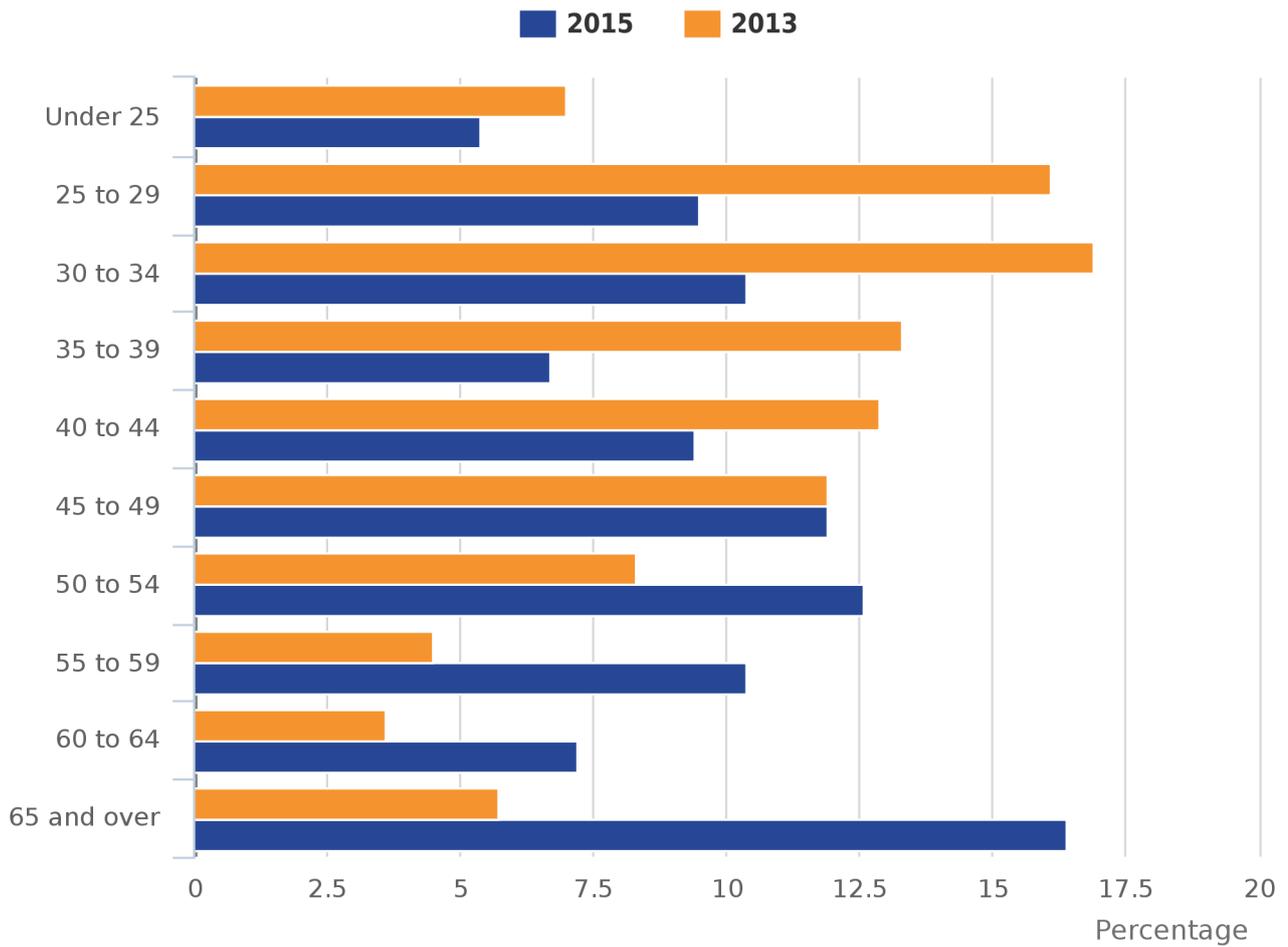


Source: Office for National Statistics

For men, a greater percentage of formations were recorded in each age group 50 and over in 2015, compared with 2013 (Figure 4). For women, there was a greater percentage of formations in each age group 45 and over in 2015 (Figure 5).

**Figure 4: Age distribution of men forming a civil partnership, 2013 and 2015**

England and Wales



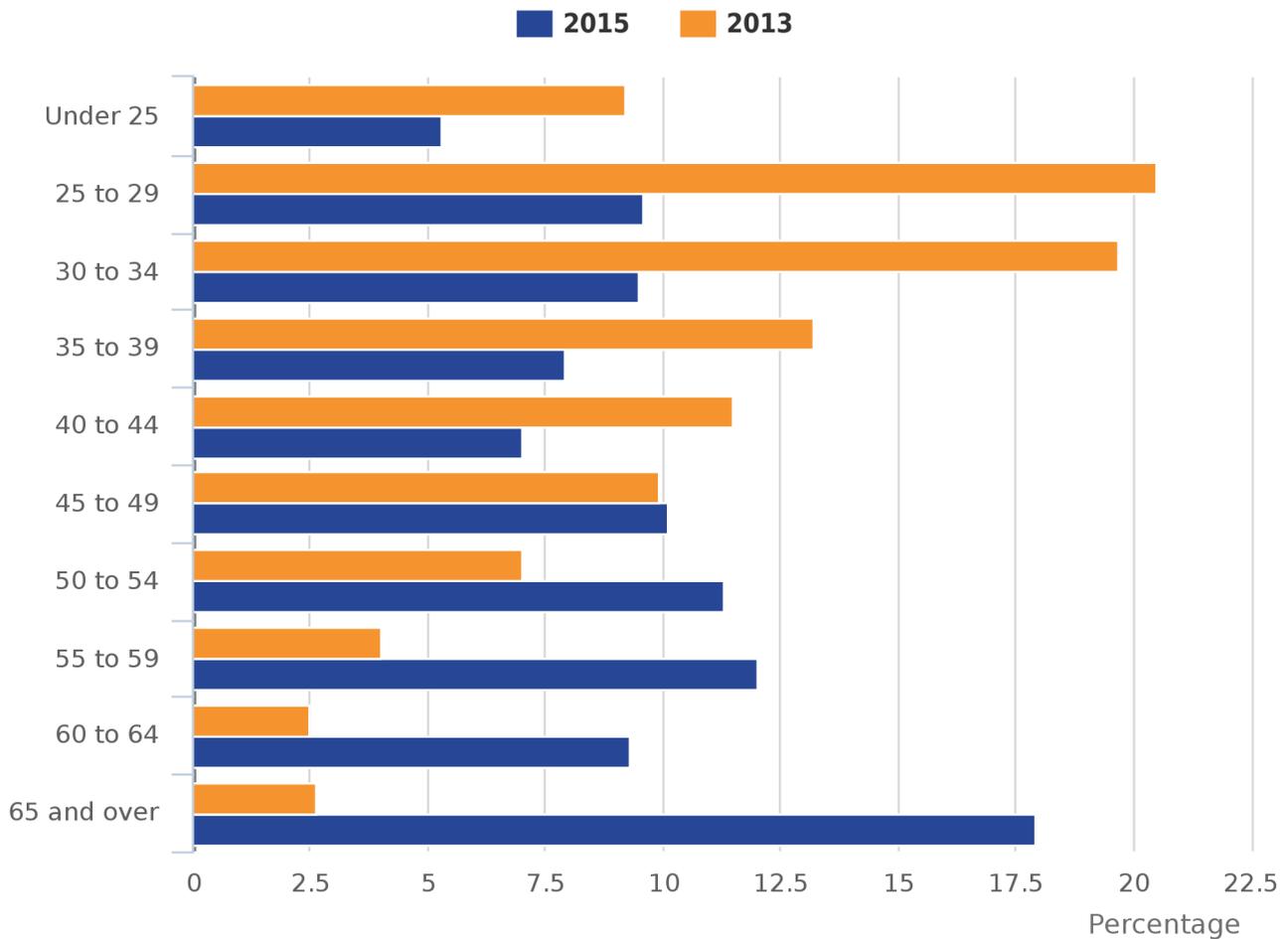
Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

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

**Figure 5: Age distribution of women forming a civil partnership, 2013 and 2015**

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

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

These changes have resulted in the average (mean) and median age at formation increasing. The greatest increase has been recorded by women; for the first time, women are now on average older than men when they form a civil partnership.

The average age at civil partnership formation rose to 48.5 years for men and 49.1 years for women in 2015, compared with 40.8 years and 37.9 respectively in 2013.

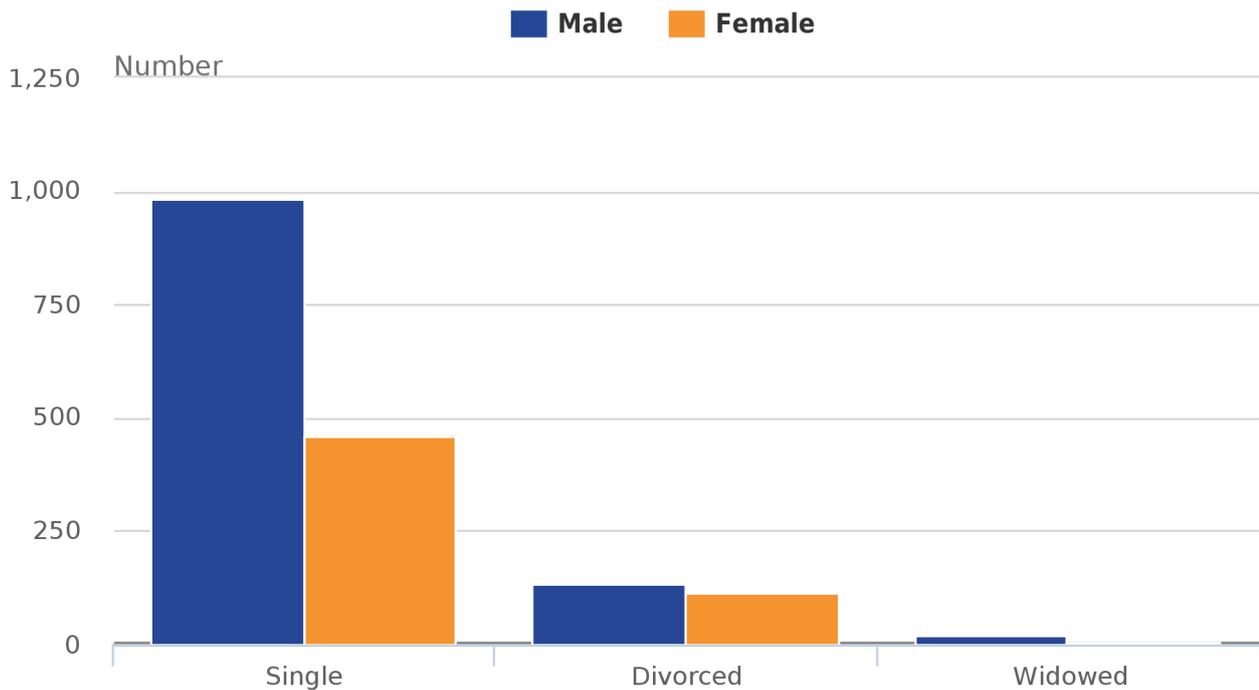
The median age at formation rose to 48.9 years for men and 50.0 years for women in 2015, compared with 39.0 years and 35.0 years respectively in 2013.

## 6 . The majority of persons entering a civil partnership had never married or formed a civil partnership before

The majority (84%) of those forming civil partnerships in 2015 were single (having never previously entered into a marriage or civil partnership); this compares with 87% in 2014 and 85% in 2013.

**Figure 6: Previous marital status of men and women forming a civil partnership, 2015**

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Single refers to people who have never married or formed a civil partnership.
2. Divorced refers to people whose former marriage or civil partnership has been terminated by dissolution or annulment.
3. Widowed refers to people whose former marriage or civil partnership has been terminated by the death of the spouse or civil partner.

## 7. London was the most popular place to form a civil partnership

London has continually been the most popular region in England in which to form a civil partnership. In 2015, over a third (34%) of all civil partnerships were formed in London, compared with 31% in 2014, and 26% in 2013.

**Table 1: Number of civil partnership formations by sex and area of occurrence, 2015**

England, Wales and regions in England

Area of formation	Total	Male	Female
England	832	556	276
North East	13	5	8
North West	57	37	20
Yorkshire and The Humber	46	17	29
East Midlands	49	30	19
West Midlands	44	28	16
East	73	54	19
London	294	221	73
South East	158	103	55
South West	98	61	37
Wales	29	14	15

Source: Office for National Statistics

In the North East, Yorkshire and The Humber, and Wales, a greater number of civil partnerships were formed between women than men in 2015; this represents a different trend to the greater number of partnerships recorded to men within England and Wales as a whole.

Brighton and Hove was the local authority with the largest number of civil partnership registrations in 2015, with 28 male and 10 female registrations. Islington (19 male and 10 female) and Wandsworth (25 male and 4 female) had the second largest number of registrations.

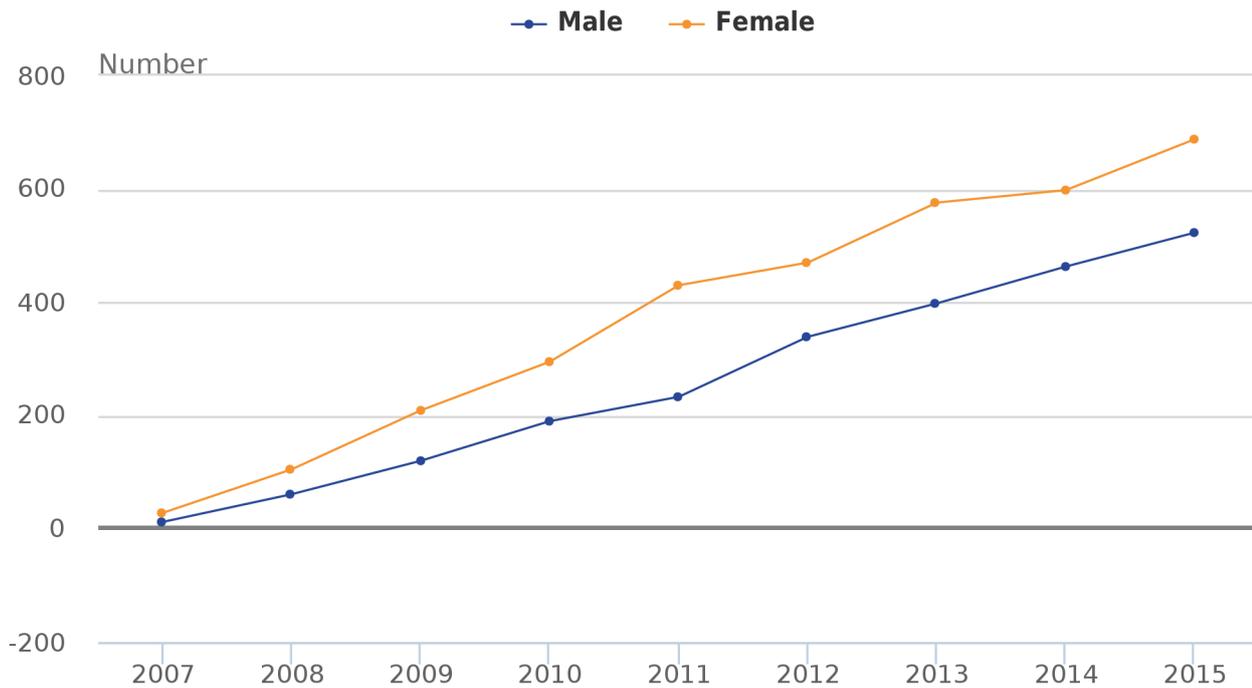
## 8 . Civil partnership dissolutions continue to rise

There were 1,211 civil partnership dissolutions granted in England and Wales in 2015, compared with 1,061 in 2014; an increase of 14%. Female couples accounted for 57% of all dissolutions in 2015.

Higher numbers of dissolutions have occurred among females than males each year since civil partnerships dissolutions were first recorded in 2007 – a pattern also evident in others countries with same sex partnership laws such as Norway and Sweden.

**Figure 7: Civil partnership dissolutions by sex, 2007 to 2015**

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

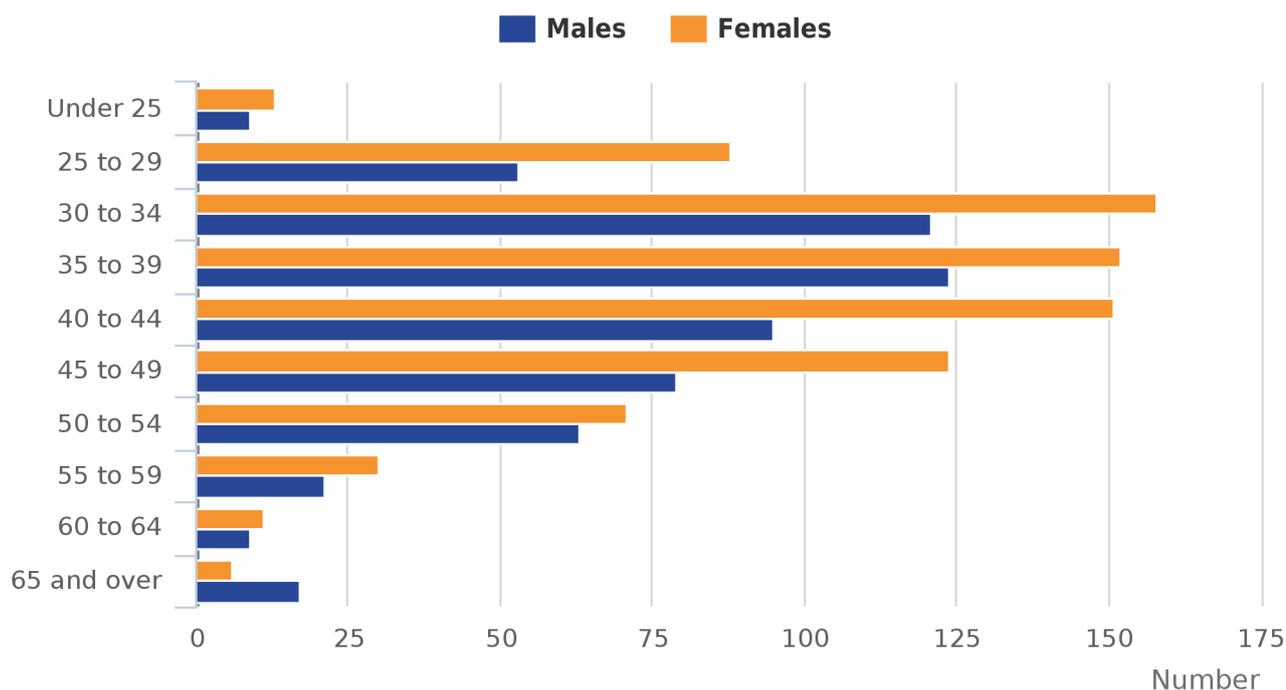
The rising number of dissolutions since 2007 is, in part, a consequence of the increase in the number of civil partners living in England and Wales following the introduction of civil partnerships. The availability of marriage for same sex couples, and the provision for couples to convert an existing civil partnership into marriage since 2014, will result in a decline in the number of civil partners living in England and Wales in the future. This is expected to cause a reduction in the number of dissolutions in the future.

By the end of 2015, 6.8% of male and 11.7% of female civil partnerships in England and Wales are estimated to have ended in dissolution (information on the method used to derive these estimates is available in Quality and methodology note 7).

At ages 65 and over, more men than women dissolved their civil partnership in 2015; at younger ages, more women than men dissolved their civil partnership (Figure 8). In 2015, the number of dissolutions was highest among men aged 35 to 39 and women aged 30 to 34.

**Figure 8: Civil partnership dissolutions by age and sex, 2015**

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Figures by age will not sum to the total number of civil partnerships since 42% of records have no age stated for the partners. This percentage has increased notably from 11% in 2013. We are working with the courts to improve this.

The average (mean) age at dissolution of civil partnership in England and Wales in 2015 remained at 41.1 years for men and increased to 40.3 years for women, up from 39.5 years in 2014.

The median age at dissolution in 2015 was 39.5 years for both men and women. For men, the median age at dissolution remained unchanged in 2015 while for women the median age increased from 38.5 years in 2014.

Male civil partners are on average older than females when they dissolve a civil partnership. This reflects the trend observed prior to 2015 where men had a higher average age at formation of civil partnerships than women.

## 9 . 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.

## 10 . Links to related ONS statistics

Further statistics on civil partnership [formations](#) and [dissolutions, marriages, marriages of same sex couples \(provisional figures\)](#) , [families and households](#), and [population estimates by marital status](#) are available on our website.

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 ([vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk) or telephone: +44 (0)1329 444110). User requested data will be published on [our website](#).

## 11 . What has changed within this publication

Following the introduction of marriages of same sex couples, the number of civil partnerships formed has declined dramatically. Due to the relatively small number of civil partnerships formed in 2015, datasets have not been published alongside this bulletin – data have been included in the bulletin instead.

## 12 . Quality and methodology

1. This is the first time that 2015 civil partnership statistics for England and Wales have been published.
2. Civil partnerships formed in England and Wales in 2015 but received by ONS after 10 August 2016 are not included in this bulletin.
3. Civil partnership statistics are compiled to enable the analysis of social and demographic trends. They are also used for considering and monitoring policy changes.
4. The [Civil Partnerships Quality and Methodology Information](#) document contains important information on:
  - the strengths and limitations of the data
  - the quality of the output, including the accuracy of the data, how it compares with related data
  - uses and users
  - how the output was created
5. Civil partnership statistics are comparable between countries within the UK; more information on comparability is available in our [Civil Partnerships Quality and Methodology Information](#).
6. The [Revisions policies for population statistics \(including civil partnership statistics\)](#) is available on our website.
7. The percentage of civil partnerships ending in dissolution is 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 civil partnerships formed in another country.
8. The mean age is the sum of all age values divided by the total number of values.
9. The median age is a value calculated by finding the middle age within the dataset.