

Table 23 - Demographic Yearbook 2016

Table 23 presents the marriages cross-classified by age of groom and age of bride for the latest available year between 2007 and 2016.

Description of variables: Marriage is defined as the act, ceremony or process by which the legal relationship of spouses is constituted. The legality of the union may be established by civil, religious or other means as recognized by the laws of each country¹.

Marriage statistics in this table, therefore, include both first marriages and remarriages after divorce, widowhood or annulment. They do not, unless otherwise noted, include resumption of marriage ties after legal separation. These statistics refer to the number of marriages performed, and not to the number of persons marrying.

Age is defined as age at last birthday, that is, the difference between the date of birth and the date of the occurrence of the event, expressed in completed solar years. The age classification used for brides in this table is the following: under 15 years, 5-year age groups through 90-94, and 95 years and over, depending on the availability of data. Age classification for grooms is restricted to: under 15 years, 5-year age groups from 15 to 59, and 60 years and over.

In an effort to provide interpretation of these statistics, countries or areas providing data on marriages by age of groom and bride have been requested to specify "the minimum legal age at which marriage can take place with and without parental consent". This information is presented in the table 23-1 below.

Reliability of data: Data from civil registers of marriages that are reported as incomplete (less than 90 per cent completeness) or of unknown completeness are considered unreliable and are set in *italics* rather than in roman type. Table 22 and the technical notes for that table provide more detailed information on the completeness of marriage registration. For more information about the quality of vital statistics data in general, see Section 4.2 of the Technical Notes.

Limitations: Statistics on marriages by age of groom and age of bride are subject to the same qualifications as have been set forth for vital statistics in general and marriage statistics in particular as discussed in Section 4 of the Technical Notes.

The fact that marriage is a legal event, unlike birth and death that are biological events, has implications for international comparability of data. Marriage has been defined, for statistical purposes, in terms of the laws of individual countries or areas. These laws vary throughout the world. In addition, comparability is further limited because some countries or areas compile statistics only for civil marriages although religious marriages may also be legally recognized; in other countries or areas, the only available records are church registers and, therefore, the statistics may not reflect marriages that are civil marriages only.

Because in many countries or areas marriage is a civil legal contract which, to establish its legality, must be celebrated before a civil officer, it follows that for these countries or areas registration would tend to be almost automatic at the time of, or immediately following, the marriage ceremony. This factor should be kept in mind when considering the reliability of data, described above.

Because these statistics are classified according to age, they are subject to the limitations with respect to accuracy of age reporting similar to those already discussed in connection with Section 3.1.3 of the Technical Notes. It is probable that biases are less pronounced in marriage statistics, because information is obtained from the persons concerned and since marriage is a legal act, the participants are likely to give correct information. However, in some countries or areas, there appears to be a concentration of marriages at the legal minimum age for marriage and at the age at which valid marriage may be contracted without parental consent, indicating perhaps an overstatement in some cases to comply with the law.

Aside from the possibility of age misreporting, it should be noted that marriage patterns at younger ages, that is, for ages up to 24 years, are influenced to a large extent by laws regarding the minimum age for marriage.

Factors that may influence age reporting, particularly at older ages include an inclination to understate the age of the bride in order that it may be equal to or less than that of the groom.

The absence of data in the unknown age group does not necessarily indicate completely accurate reporting and tabulation of the age item. It is sometimes an indication that the unknowns have been eliminated by assigning ages to them before tabulation, or by proportionate distribution after tabulation.

Another age-reporting factor that must be kept in mind in using these data is the variation that may result from calculating age at marriage from year of birth rather than from day, month and year of birth. Information on this factor is given in footnotes when known.

Earlier data: Marriages by age of groom and age of bride have been shown for the latest available year in most issues of the *Demographic Yearbook*. Data cross-classified by age of groom and bride have been presented in previous issues featuring marriage and divorce statistics. For information on the specific topics and the years covered, readers should consult the Historical Index.

23-1 Minimum legal age at which marriage can take place

Country or area	With parental consent		Without parental consent	
	Groom	Bride	Groom	Bride
Africa				
Botswana	18	18	21	21
Burkina Faso ²	18	15	20	17
Burundi ⁵			21	18
Cameroon ³	18	15	21	18
Egypt	18	18		
Ghana			18	18
Guinea	25	18		
Liberia	16	16	21	18
Libya ⁴	18	18		
Malawi ⁵			18	18
Mauritius	16	16	18	18
Morocco ⁵			18	18
Namibia	18	18	21	21
Saint Helena ex. Dep.	16	16	21	21
Senegal	Under 18	Under 18	18	18
Seychelles	16	16	18	18
Sierra Leone ⁵			18	18
South Africa ⁶	Under 18	Under 18	18	18
Swaziland	18	18	21	21
Uganda ^{5, 7}			18	18
Zimbabwe	16	16	18	18
America, North				
Anguilla	16	16	18	18
Aruba ⁸	16	16	18	18
Bermuda	16	16	18	18
Canada ⁹	16	16	18	18
Cayman Islands	16	16	18	18
Costa Rica	15	15	18	18
Cuba	16	14	18	16

Country or area	With parental consent		Without parental consent	
	Groom	Bride	Groom	Bride
Curaçao	16	16	18	18
Dominican Republic	16	15	18	18
El Salvador	Under 18	Under 18	18	18
Greenland ⁵			18	18
Jamaica	16	16	18	18
Mexico ¹⁰	Under 18	Under 18	18	18
Montserrat ¹¹	16	16	18	18
Panama	16	14	18	18
Puerto Rico	17	17	21	21
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines			18	18
Trinidad and Tobago ¹²	Under 18	Under 18	18	18
America, South				
Bolivia (Plurinational State of) ¹³	16	14	18	18
Brazil	16	16	18	18
Chile	16	16	18	18
Colombia	14	14	18	18
Ecuador	14	12	18	18
Suriname	17	15	21	21
Uruguay	16	16	18	18
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	14	12	18	18
Asia				
Armenia			18	17
Azerbaijan	18	17		
Bahrain			15	
Cambodia			18	18
China, Hong Kong SAR	16	16	21	21
China, Macao SAR	16	16	18	18
Cyprus	16	16	18	18
Georgia	16	16	18	18
Indonesia			19	16
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	18	15		
Israel ⁵			18	18
Japan	18	16	20	20
Jordan	18	18		
Kazakhstan	16	16	18	17
Kyrgyzstan ⁵			16	16
Malaysia ¹⁴	18	16 and 18	18 and 21	18 and 21
Mongolia			18	18

Country or area	With parental consent		Without parental consent	
	Groom	Bride	Groom	Bride
Nepal	18	18	20	20
Oman ⁵			18	18
Philippines	18	18	22	22
Republic of Korea	18	18	19	19
Singapore ¹⁵	Under 21	Under 21	21	21
State of Palestine ¹⁶		14.5	15.5	
Tajikistan	17	17	18	18
Turkey	16	16	18	18
Uzbekistan	18	17		
Europe				
Aland Islands ¹⁹			18	18
Albania			18	18
Austria ¹⁷	16	16	18	18
Belarus	15	15	18	18
Belgium			18	18
Bosnia and Herzegovina			18	18
Bulgaria	16	16	18	18
Croatia	16	16	18	18
Czechia ¹⁸	16	16	18	18
Denmark	15	15	18	18
Estonia	15	15	18	18
Faeroe Islands ⁵			18	18
Finland ¹⁹			18	18
France ⁵			18	18
Germany ²⁰	16	16	18	18
Gibraltar	16	16	18	18
Greece ²¹			18	18
Hungary	16	16	18	18
Iceland	No limit	No limit	18	18
Ireland ^{5, 22}			18	18
Isle of Man	16	16	18	18
Italy	16	16	18	18
Jersey	16	16	18	18
Latvia	16	16	18	18
Liechtenstein ¹⁷			18	18
Lithuania ²³	15	15	18	18
Luxembourg			18	18
Malta			16	16
Montenegro	16	16	18	18
Netherlands	16	16	18	18

Country or area	With parental consent		Without parental consent	
	Groom	Bride	Groom	Bride
Norway	16	16	18	18
Poland ²⁴			18	18
Portugal	16	16	18	18
Republic of Moldova			18	16
Romania ²⁵	16	16	18	18
Russian Federation	16	16	18	18
Serbia ²⁶	16	16	18	18
Slovakia			16	16
Slovenia	15	15	18	18
Spain	14	14	18	18
Sweden ²⁷			18	18
Switzerland			18	18
TFYR of Macedonia	16	16	18	18
Ukraine ¹⁷	16	16	18	18
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	16	16	18	18
Oceania				
Australia ²⁸	16	16	18	18
Cook Islands	16	16	21	21
Guam ²⁹	17	17	18	18
New Caledonia			18	18
New Zealand	16	16	18	18

NOTES

¹ *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System Revision 3*, Sales No. E.13.XVII.10, United Nations, New York, 2014.

² In addition, an age waiver may be granted by a civil court for a serious reason from 15 years for women and 18 years for men.

³ Marriages can be exceptionally authorised by the President of the Republic for brides who are at least 13 years old without parental consent.

⁴ According to the Islamic law, marriage requires parental consent. Consent of the bride herself, as well as the guardian's consent are fundamental in the marriage contract. Young men usually choose the consent of the parents. Minimum age at marriage is usually 18 years. According to the law, marriage is not restricted to individuals over the age of 18 years.

⁵ The minimum legal age at which marriage can take place is the same with or without parental consent.

⁶ Marriages under the age of 18 can be performed with parental consent or with judicial permission if parental consent has been unreasonably refused. Additionally, boys under the age of 18 and girls under the age of 16 may also be required to seek the consent of the Minister of Home Affairs.

⁷ As reported by Uganda Bureau of Statistics, marriages with or without parental consent may occur much earlier than 18 years of age.

⁸ The legal minimum marriage age is 18, with two exceptions: if the persons concerned are older than 16 and the woman is pregnant or has given birth or the Minister of Security and Justice grants a dispensation based on their request.

⁹ Marriage is under provincial and territory legislations. Without parental consent, the minimum legal age at which marriage can take place is 18 years of age in all provinces and territories in Canada except in British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, and Yukon where the minimum legal age is 19 years. With parental consent, the minimum legal age is 16 years in all provinces except in Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon. With parental consent, in Northwest Territories, and Yukon the minimum legal age is 15 years whereas in Nunavut, the minimum legal age is 18 years.

-
- ¹⁰ Each of the 31 Federal States and the Federal District has its own civil code for marriage. Marriages under 18 require parental consent. Additionally, in the Federal District and in the states of Guanajuato, Morelos, Puebla and San Luis Potosí the minimum age with parental consent is 16 for both bride and groom and in the states of Michoacán, Nayarit, Sinaloa and Sonora the minimum age with parental consent is 14 for the bride and 16 for the groom.
- ¹¹ Consent can be given by a guardian or a person who has custody of the child wishing to marry. Also, the Governor has discretion to permit persons as young as 15 years and 1 day old to marry, if he thinks that getting married is in the best interest of the persons who are intending to marry and the persons in this instance must have also received the necessary consent.
- ¹² With parental consent, age for marriage is 14 years for males and 12 years for females in a civil marriage; 16 years for males and 12 years for females in a Muslim marriage; 18 years for males and 14 years for females in a Hindu marriage; and 18 years for males and 16 for females in Orisa marriage.
- ¹³ Grooms younger than 16 and brides younger than 14 need court authorization.
- ¹⁴ For marriage with parental consent, it is 18 years of age for males whereas it is 18 years of age for non-Muslim females and 16 years of age for Muslim females. Without parental consent, it is 21 years of age for non-Muslims and 18 years of age for Muslims.
- ¹⁵ Specified minimum legal marriage age refers to marriages contracted under the Women's Charter. For Muslim marriages under the Administration of Muslim Law Act, no marriage shall be solemnised when either party is below the age of 18 years. Notwithstanding that, Muslim women below the age of 18 years who have attained the age of puberty may be married under the Administration of the Muslim Law Act.
- ¹⁶ The legal marriage age for females is 14 years, 6 months and 22 days. There must be parental consent (father or brother if the father is dead). The legal marriage age for males is 15 years, 6 months and 21 days. Parental consent is not required.
- ¹⁷ Persons less than 18 years old need a decision of the court.
- ¹⁸ The court may, for important reasons, allow the marriage of a minor over 16 years.
- ¹⁹ Persons less than 18 years old need the permission of the Ministry of Justice.
- ²⁰ Marriage at 16-17 years of age requires that the other spouse be an adult (18 years or older) and an exemption from the requirement of majority by a competent family court.
- ²¹ Under some conditions (e.g. pregnancy) the marriage can take place without age restrictions.
- ²² An exemption on the minimum age can be granted by court order if granting of such an exemption is in the best interests of the parties to the intended marriage and good reasons for the application can be demonstrated.
- ²³ In addition to parental consent, persons less than 18 years old need judicial approval. In case of pregnancy, marriage can be allowed below 15 years of age.
- ²⁴ Females can marry at the age of 16 or 17 years with parental and court consent.
- ²⁵ Marriage for persons under 18 years requires parental consent, a medical certificate and the agreement by the local family court.
- ²⁶ Marriage is not allowed for persons below the age of 18; only the court may, for good cause, permit marriage to a minor who has attained the age of 16 years of age, and attained physical and mental maturity to exercise the rights and responsibilities of marriage. Parental consent is not required.
- ²⁷ With parental consent, no limit but authorities must approve; without parental consent, 18 years of age for Swedish citizens.
- ²⁸ Persons 16 or 17 years old need the court approval.
- ²⁹ Under 18, both a court order and parent or legal guardian consent are needed.