

Table 23 - Demographic Yearbook 2012

Table 23 presents the marriages cross-classified by age of groom and age of bride for the latest available year between 2003 and 2012.

Description of variables: Marriage is defined as the act, ceremony or process by which the legal relationship of husband and wife 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 23 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. For this reason the practice of tabulating data by date of registration does not generally pose serious problems of comparability as it does in the case of birth and death statistics.

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
Egypt	18	16	21	21
Ghana			18	18
Liberia	16	16	21	18
Libya ³	18	18		
Malawi ⁴			18	18
Mauritius	16	16	18	18
Morocco ⁴			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 ⁴			18	18
South Africa	18	15	21	21
Uganda ^{4, 5}			18	18
Zimbabwe	16	16	18	18
America, North				
Anguilla			18	18
Aruba	18	15	18	18
Bermuda ⁴			18	18
Canada ⁶	16	16	18	18
Cayman Islands	16	16	18	18
Costa Rica	15	15	18	18
Cuba	16	14	18	16
Dominican Republic	17	16	18	18
El Salvador	15	14	18	18
Greenland ⁷	16	15	18	18

Country or area	With parental consent		Without parental consent	
	Groom	Bride	Groom	Bride
Jamaica	16	16	18	18
Mexico ⁸	16	14	18	18
Montserrat ⁹	16	16	18	18
Netherlands Antilles			18	18
Panama	16	14	18	18
Puerto Rico	18	16	21	21
Trinidad and Tobago ¹⁰	Under 18	Under 18	18	18
America, South				
Brazil	16	16	18	18
Chile	16	16	18	18
Colombia	14	14	18	18
Ecuador	Under 18	Under 18	18	18
Suriname	17	15	21	21
Uruguay	14	12	18	18
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) ⁴			12	12
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	18	15		
Israel ⁴			17	17
Japan	18	16	20	20
Kazakhstan	16	16	18	17
Kyrgyzstan	16	16	18	18
Malaysia ¹¹	18	16	18 and 21	16 and 21
Nepal	18	18	20	20
Occupied Palestinian Territory ¹²		14.5	15.5	
Oman ⁴			18	18
Philippines	18	18	21	21
Republic of Korea	18	18	20	20
Singapore ¹³	Under 21	Under 21	21	21
Tajikistan	17	17	18	18
Turkey	16	16	18	18

Country or area	With parental consent		Without parental consent	
	Groom	Bride	Groom	Bride
Uzbekistan			17	17
Europe				
Åland Islands ⁴			18	18
Albania	18	16		
Austria ¹⁴	16	16	18	18
Belarus ¹⁵			18	18
Belgium	Under 18	Under 18	18	18
Bosnia and Herzegovina			18	18
Bulgaria	16	16	18	18
Croatia	16	16	18	18
Czech Republic	16	16	18	18
Denmark	15	15	18	18
Estonia	15	15	18	18
Finland ¹⁶			18	18
France ⁴			18	18
Germany ¹⁷	16	16	18	18
Gibraltar	16	16	18	18
Greece ¹⁸			18	18
Hungary	16	16	18	18
Iceland ⁴			18	18
Ireland ^{4,19}			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 ¹⁴			18	18
Lithuania ²⁰	15	15	18	18
Luxembourg			18	16
Malta			16	16
Montenegro	16	16	18	18
Netherlands	16	16	18	18
Norway	16	16	18	18
Poland ²¹			18	18
Portugal	16	16	18	18
Republic of Moldova			18	16
Romania ⁴			18	18
Russian Federation	16	16	18	18
Serbia	16	16	18	18
Slovakia ²²			16	16

Country or area	With parental consent		Without parental consent	
	Groom	Bride	Groom	Bride
Slovenia	15	15	18	18
Spain	14	14	18	18
Sweden ²³			18	18
Switzerland	16	16	18	18
TFYR of Macedonia	16	16	18	18
Ukraine	15	15	18	17
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	16	16	18	18
Oceania				
Australia	16	16	18	18
Cook Islands	16	16	21	21
New Caledonia			18	18
New Zealand	16	16	18	18

NOTES

¹ *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System Revision 2*, Sales No. 01.XVII.10, United Nations, New York, 2001.

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 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.

⁴ The minimum legal age at which marriage can take place is the same respectively for bride and groom with or without parental consent.

⁵ As reported by Uganda Bureau of Statistics, marriages with or without parental consent may occur much earlier than 18 years of age.

⁶ 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.

⁷ To marry at age younger than 18 years, both parental and official consent are needed. Pregnancy is one of the very few reasons to get official consent.

⁸ Each of the 31 Federal States and the Federal District has its own civil code for marriage. Exceptions to ages given in the table are as follows: without parental consent, the minimum legal age at which marriage can take place in Baja California and Tlaxcala is 16 years for males and 14 years for females whereas in Baja California Sur, it is 16 years for females. With parental consent, the minimum legal age for marriage is 16 years for both males and females in Aguascalientes, Campeche, Chiapas, Distrito Federal, Guerrero, Jalisco, Morelos, Puebla, Quintana Roo, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, and Sonora. With parental consent, the minimum legal age for marriage is under 18 years for both males and females in Coahuila, Hidalgo, and Zacatecas. The Minimum legal age for marriage remains the same respectively for bride and groom with or without parental consent in Baja California, Baja California Sur and Tlaxcala.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Without parental consent, it is 21 years of age for non-Muslim males and 18 years of age for Muslim males whereas it is 21 years of age for non-Muslim females and 16 years of age for Muslim females. For marriage with parental consent, approval of relevant authorities is required.

¹² 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.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ Persons less than 18 years old need a decision of the court.

¹⁵ In compliance with the Marriage and Family Code of the Republic of Belarus, in the exclusive cases related to pregnancy, childbirth, and in case of acquiring by a juvenile of a full legal capacity under lawful age, the civil registration offices are in a position to reduce the marriage age of espousing persons, but not more than by 3 years. The marriage age is to be reduced by an application of espousing persons; the parental consent is not required.

¹⁶ Persons less than 18 years old need the permission of the Ministry of Justice.

¹⁷ Marriage at 16-17 years of age requires that the other spouse be an adult already betrothed (18 years) and an exemption from the requirement of majority by a competent family court.

¹⁸ Under some conditions (e.g. pregnancy) the marriage can take place without age restrictions.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ Females can marry at the age of 16 or 17 years with parental and court consent.

²² A marriage cannot be entered into by a minor. The court may exceptionally and for important reasons approve of entrance into marriage by a minor older than sixteen years. Without this approval, the marriage is invalid and the court shall declare the invalidity even without a petition.

²³ With parental consent, no limit but authorities must approve; without parental consent, 18 years of age for Swedish citizens.