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Marriage and remarriage



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Marriage and remarriage

Marriage is an enormously varied institution which has undergone substantial change over the last thirty years. No longer is marriage an almost mandatory transition that men and women enter into during their early twenties and remain in “for better or for worse” until one partner dies. While the majority of people marry at some point of their life, the probability of marrying is declining and the proportion of a person’s adult life spent as a married person is declining.

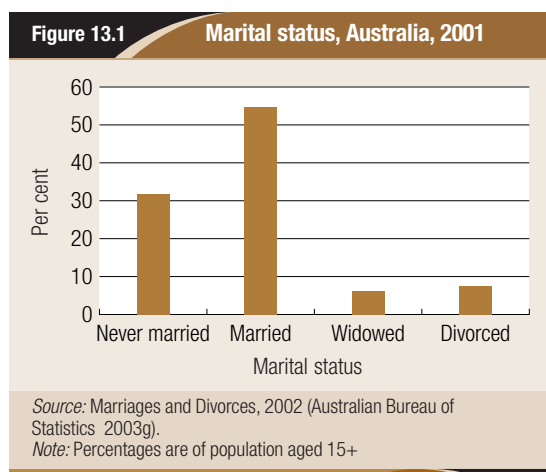
Both men and women frequently live together before they marry (p. 114-15), many do not marry at all, those that do marry are doing so later in life and others marry several times. When people do marry they increasingly do so in a civil rather than a religious ceremony. Although the majority of marriages are of two never married parties, an increasing proportion of marriages consist of at least one person who has previously been married and many of these people already have children from a previous marriage (Chapter 5).

This chapter details the extent and nature of the changes in which Australian men and women enter into marriage.

Marriage

Is marriage becoming less popular?

Despite the many changes in marriage patterns over the last thirty years and a decline in marriage rates, marriage remains a popular institution. Even allowing for all those who are divorced, cohabiting, widowed or not at a realistic marriageable age, the majority of the population over the age of fifteen is married. In the 2001 Census 52 per cent of all people over the age of 15 were married and a further 16.5 per cent had been married but were now widowed, divorced or separated (Figure 13.1).



The marital status of the Australian population has always been in a state of change. The last quarter of a century has seen a number of significant changes. Of the population aged over 15:

- The percentage who are legally married has declined from 65.4 per cent in 1976 to 54.6 per cent in 2001 – a 17 per cent decline in the size of the married population in about 25 years.
- The size of the never married population has increased from a quarter of all those aged 15 and over in 1976 to almost a third (31.8 per cent) in 2001.
- The size of the divorced population has increased from 2.3 per cent in 1976 to 7.4 per cent in 2001.

Although the proportion of the population that is divorced at any given time remains relatively small, the change from 2.3 per cent to 7.4 per cent is substantial. Furthermore, since many divorcees remarry, the percentage of people who are divorced at any point underestimates the number who are divorced at some point.

Is marriage less popular than 100 years ago?

It is easy to develop a distorted picture of patterns of change when viewing patterns just over the relatively short term. A longer term perspective provides a different picture regarding the changing trends in marital status.

As Figure 13.2 shows the decline in the size of the married population since the early 1970s has resulted in a return to circumstances apparent in much earlier times.

Indeed, marriage was slightly more prevalent in 2001 than 100 years earlier when just 46.4 per cent of the population aged over 15 were married. From the beginning of the 20th century the percentage of the population that were married grew steadily from 46.4 per cent in 1901 and peaked in 1971 when 64.5 per cent of the population were married.

The relatively low level of marriage at the turn of the 20th century was partly because there was a greater overall sex imbalance in that earlier period (115 men for every 100 women at that time, compared with 96 for every 100 women in 2001), along with a gold rush in Western Australia which enticed more single men than women. In 1901, Australia was also still feeling the effects of the severe economic depression of the 1890s, with economic prosperity not returning until the 1920s (ABS 2001e; McDonald 1995).

Further, there is evidence that towards the beginning of the 20th century, the English middle class

norm for couples to delay marriage until they could achieve a “respectable” standard of living was embraced and encouraged among the working class. These factors not only contributed to delays in marriage but also to a relatively high proportion of people not marrying at all (McDonald 1995).

Statistics on the prevalence of marriage provide snapshots in time that do not take into account all those who have embraced marriage at some stage in their life, including those whose marriages have ended in divorce or widowhood. Despite the declining married population in recent decades, most people do eventually marry, with 1997–99 trends suggesting that this would apply to 72 per cent of men and 77 per cent of women. Nevertheless, these proportions are lower than those of just 12 years earlier, when 79 per cent of men and 86 per cent of women would marry (ABS 2001e).

As noted above, the size of the married population at any point of time reflects the proportions of the population marrying in earlier years. Thus, the current size of the married population would be much lower were it not for the marriage boom of the 1940s to 1970s.

The increasing size of the never married population over the last quarter of a century needs to be seen in the light of longer term trends. Figure 13.3 shows that over the 20th century the size of the never married population largely mirrors changes in the size of the married population. It shows that:

- In 1901, 46.7 per cent of the over 15 population had never married.
- By 1933, the percentage that had never married had declined to 38.5 per cent but this was still considerably higher than today’s high figures.

- There has been an increase in the size of the never married population since the early 1970s when just a quarter of the over 15 population had never married.
- By 2001, almost a third (31.8 per cent) of the population aged over 15 had never married.
- Today’s high “never married” figures are only high in comparison with the low levels in the post-war period from 1950 to 1975. By comparison with the size of the never married population early in the century, today’s never married population is relatively small.

The statistics in Figures 13.1 to 13.3 report registered marital status. Because of the sharp rise in new forms of partnering – especially cohabitation – these figures do not necessarily mean that fewer people are living without a partner. For example, in 2001, 18 per cent of the divorced population were living in a cohabiting relationship and 14.7 per cent of those over the age of 15 that had never married were living in a cohabiting relationship. Changing patterns of partnering have been discussed in Chapter 10 and will be discussed further later in this chapter.

Have marriage rates changed?

Getting married is not the “given” that it once was. Since the early 1970s marriage has increasingly become a matter of choice. Certainly, alternative pathways to marriage have developed and alternative forms of partnering have become widely accepted.

Are fewer people marrying?

The crude marriage rate is the number of marriages registered during the year per 1000 population. In reading crude marriage rate figures it must be

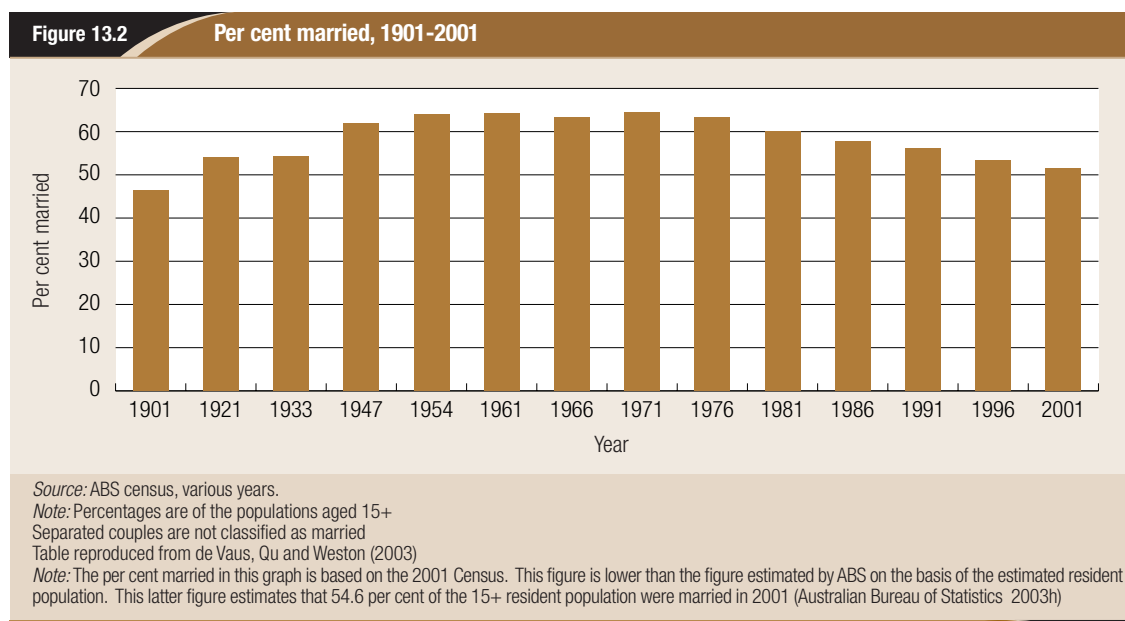
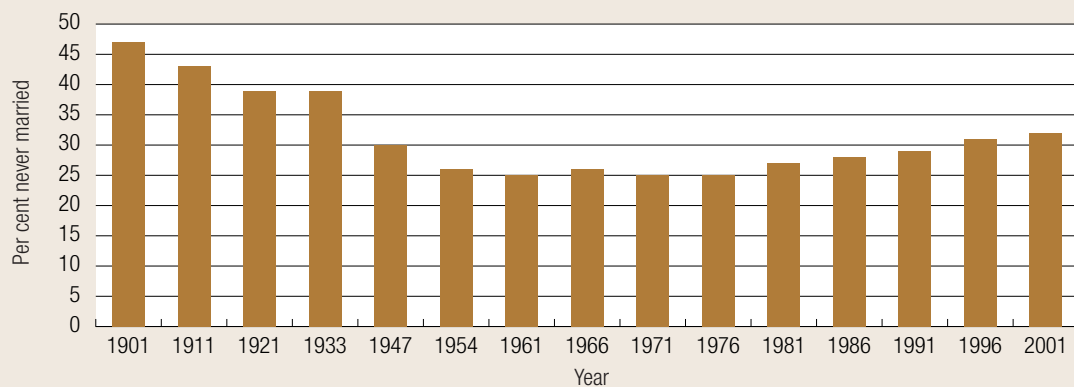


Figure 13.3 Per cent never married, Australia 1901-2001



Source: Commonwealth Census (various years).
Applies to people aged 15+

remembered that a large proportion of the population are either already married or too young to marry. The crude marriage rate has fluctuated considerably over the years as Figure 13.4 illustrates. Marriage rates are influenced by a variety of factors including economic circumstances, values and the population profile (that is, the proportion of the population available to marry). In the 1880s economic boom and in the period immediately following World War II the marriage rate peaked. The crude marriage rate declined sharply during the economic disasters of the 1890s and 1930s. It peaked following World War II and again in the early 1970s after which it has shown a steady decline.

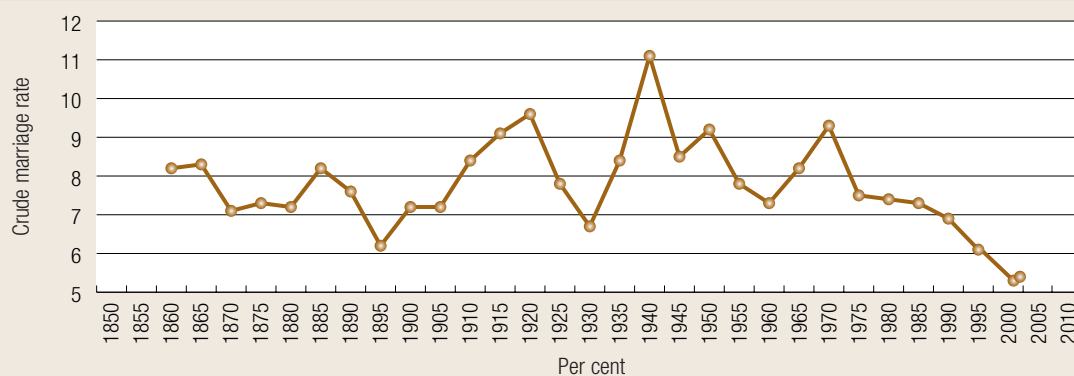
By the late 1990s the crude marriage rate had declined to an all time low but was similar to the lows achieved in the economic depressions of the 1890s and 1930s. The reason for the low rates in the 1990s however, are likely to be different to those in the 1890s and 1930s when economic hardship was the primary cause. In the 1990s, economic factors most probably contributed to the ongoing decline in the marriage rate but the low rates were a continuation of trends that had been in evidence for some time. It is

likely that the low rates of the 1990s are partly due to changing values and views about marriage rather than economic circumstances preventing marriage as it did in the earlier periods characterised by low rates of marriage.

However, the role of economic factors in the 1990s should not be neglected. Economic restructuring has certainly made economic circumstances less certain for many people and this lack of certainty may well deter marriage and the longer term commitment it implies (p. 177).

While the crude marriage rate provides a useful trend picture it gives little idea of the rate of marriage on the basis of people *available* to marry. Figure 13.5 indicates the marriage rate calculated against the adult (15+) unmarried population. This shows that, in the year 2001, for every 1000 unmarried men, 31 married and 28 of every 1000 unmarried adult women married. This is a substantial decline in the marriage rate of the population available to marry from the rates in 1976 when the comparable rates were twice as high at 66.9 for men and 61.1 for women.

Figure 13.4 Crude marriage rate, Australia, 1860-2002



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2002g).

While marriage is still the dominant marital status for adults, marriage rates are changing and the proportion of people who were married in 2001 is substantially less than in the period from the 1950s to the late 1970s. However, as we have seen already, the percentage of the population who were married in 2001 is still a little higher than it was a century earlier (Figure 13.2). Since 1971, the percentage of the 15+ population that is married has steadily declined.

At the beginning of the 20th century a large proportion of the 15+ population had never married. In 1901, 46.7 per cent had never married. This level of non marriage declined gradually so that by 1954 just a quarter of the 15+ population had never married. This percentage of around 25 per cent who had never married remained steady until the early 1980s when it began to increase to the present level of 31.6 per cent of the 15+ population (Table 13.1).

How does Australia compare internationally?

With a crude marriage rate of 5.9 in 1998, Australia had a middle level marriage rate. The United States has one of the higher crude marriage rates followed by relatively high rates in Muslim and Asian countries. Australian crude marriage rates are nevertheless higher than in most European and Scandinavian countries (Figure 13.6).

Do Australians regard marriage as an outdated institution?

The declining rates of marriage, divorce and high rates of cohabitation might lead one to conclude that there is a widespread view in Australia that marriage is an outdated institution. The World Values Survey asked national samples in 1981 and again in 1995-97 for their views about whether marriage was an outdated institution. The findings are contained in Table 13.2.

The first point to note from these results is that the vast majority do *not* believe that marriage is an outdated institution. Overall, in the mid 1990s, just 19 per cent thought that marriage was outdated and 81

per cent thought that it was not outdated. Even in the group that was most rejecting of marriage as an institution (those younger than 35 in 1995-97) just over a quarter believed that marriage was outdated.

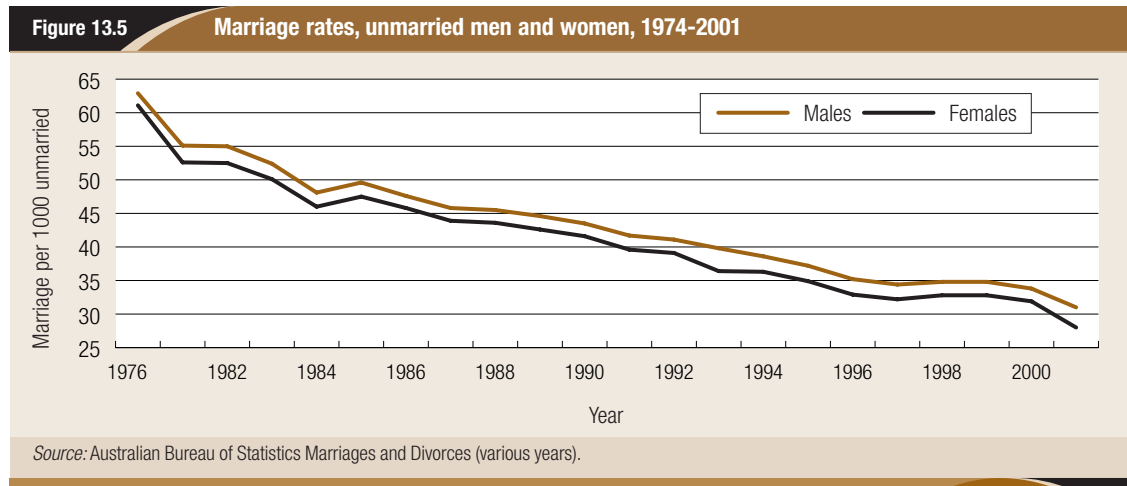
A second point from Table 13.2 is that men and women have identical views about whether marriage is an outdated institution. Third, younger people are considerably more rejecting of marriage than older people. In 1995-97, a quarter of those aged 18-34 said marriage was outdated. However, of those aged 45-64 only 9 per cent thought marriage was outdated. It is not certain whether the greater support by older people is because they have always been more pro-marriage or because people come to support marriage more as they grow older.

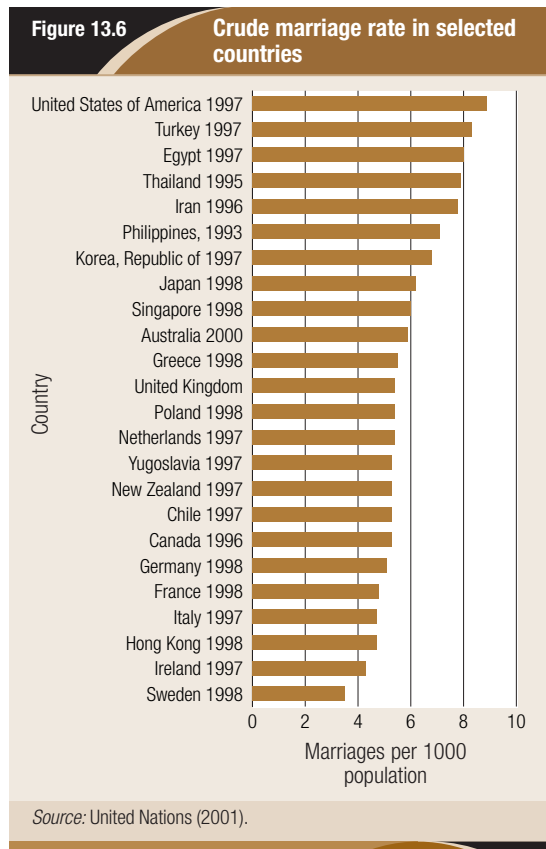
Finally, there is clear evidence of declining support for marriage as an institution. Between 1981 and

Table 13.1 Marital status of population 15 years +, 1901-2001

	Never married %	Married %	Widowed %	Separated %	Divorced %
1901	46.7	46.4	6.7		0.1
1921	39.3	54.1	6.4		0.2
1933	38.5	54.2	6.9		0.4
1947	29.7	62.0	7.5		0.9
1954	25.7	64.1	7.2	1.9	1.1
1961	25.5	64.2	7.2	2.0	1.1
1966	26.3	63.4	7.2	2.0	1.2
1971	24.9	64.5	7.1	2.0	1.5
1976	25.0	63.3	6.9	2.5	2.2
1981	26.8	60.1	6.8	2.5	3.7
1986	28.4	57.8	6.5	2.6	4.7
1991	29.3	56.2	6.3	2.9	5.3
1996	30.5	53.3	6.4	3.4	6.4
2001	31.6	51.4	6.2	3.4	7.4

Source: Australian Census for relevant years.
Note: The per cent married in this graph is based on the 2001 Census. This figure is lower than the figure estimated by ABS on the basis of the estimated resident population. This latter figure estimates that 54.6 per cent of the 15+ resident population were married in 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003g)





1995-97, the percentage saying that marriage is outdated increased from 13 to 19 per cent – a statistically significant increase. This change has taken place equally among men and women. However, the declining support for marriage was restricted to younger age groups – especially those aged 25-44. Older groups remained equally supportive of marriage as an institution (Table 13.2).

At what age do people marry?

While just over half of the 15+ population are married, this proportion varies greatly according to a

Table 13.2 Per cent saying that marriage is an outdated institution by year, gender and age, 1981-1997

	1981 %	1995-97 %
All	13	19
Gender		
Male	13	19***
Female	13	18***
Age		
18-24	19	26
25-34	13	27***
35-44	9	17***
45-54	11	12
55-64	13	13
65+	11	15

Source: World Values Survey combined CURF.
 *** difference between 1981 and 1995-97 is statistically significant at the 0.001 level

person's age. In 2001, virtually no teenagers (0.5 per cent) were married and only a tiny percentage (8.5 per cent) of those in their early twenties were married. However, by the time they reach their thirties marriage is very much in vogue with 54.9 per cent of those in their early thirties and 64 per cent of those in their late thirties being married.

How much later are people marrying?

Since 1966 there have been clear changes in the percentage of people in any age group that are married. Figure 13.7 shows the percentages of men and women in each age group that were married in 1966 and contrasts this with the percentages in 2001. The percentage of each age group that were married in 2001 is quite different than was the case in 1966.

Changes in the percentage of married people is evident among the younger age groups – especially among those aged under 40.

- Between 1966 and 2001 the teenage bride has virtually disappeared. In 1966, 8 per cent of women aged 15-19 were married. By 2001 this had dropped to just 0.5 per cent.
- There has been a sharp decline in the percentage of married people in their early twenties. In 1966, 58 per cent of women aged 20-24 were married. By 2001 just 12.6 per cent of similarly aged women had married. Among men of this age, 29.4 per cent had married in 1966 but by 2001 just 5.6 per cent of men in this age group were married.
- This decline is just as evident among those in their late twenties. Among women, the percentage who were married dropped from 84.5 per cent in 1966 to 43.2 per cent in 2001. Among men the comparable decline was from 68.8 per cent to 29.8 per cent.

Among older age groups the proportion of people who are married has increased. For example:

- In 1966, 19.5 per cent of women aged 75-79 were married but in 2001 this percentage had doubled to 41.6 per cent.
- Among men aged 75-79 just over half (54.9 per cent) were married in 1966. By 2001 this had jumped to 74.5 per cent.

This means that the way in which older people live their later life would have been quite different in 2001 than it was in 1966. Being married at this age is a useful antidote to poverty and increases the chance of having assistance if illness or disability occurs. Marriage at this age also improves the chance of continuing to live in one's own home. This increase in the proportion of older people who are married partly reflects the higher marriage rates of the 1950s and 1960s and the improved longevity of both men and women.

How old are people when they marry for the first time?

While information regarding the percentage of people in each age group that are married gives some clue as to when people marry it does not provide a full picture. The percentage of any specific age group that are married is the result of the number who have married from earlier age groups, the number in that specific age group who marry, and the number of those who married when younger subsequently divorced or were widowed.

This section focuses on changes in the age at which men and women actually marry for the first time. It provides two sets of information. First it describes age-specific marriage rates from 1921 to 2001. It then examines changes in the median age of first marriage from 1940-2001.

Age-specific marriage rates indicate the number of people per 1000 never married people in an age group that marry in a specific year. Thus an age-specific marriage rate of 66.5 for males aged 25-29 in 2001 means that for every 1000 never married males aged 25-29, 66.5 married in 2001.

Table 13.3 reports age-specific marriage rates separately for men and women for the years, 1921, 1940,

1970, 1985 and 2001. Focusing first on the rates in 2001, a number of observations can be made:

- Very few teenagers marry. Just one in every 1000 never married males aged 15-19 and 4.2 per 1000 never married females got married in 2001.
- For both males and females, the ages 25-34 were the peak ages for first marriage. For 25-29 year old males the marriage rate for these years was 66.5; for 25-29 year old females it was 83.2.
- For 30-34 year old males it was 63.1 and was 65.2 for 30-34 year old females.
- Very few men or women marry for the first time after the age of 50 (males, 3.5 per cent; females, 2.5 per cent).
- From the age of 30 onwards, the first marriage rate for women approximately halved every five years until the age of 50. For men the marriage rate halved every five years between the ages of 35-49.

Are first marriages being delayed?

The trend figures in Table 13.3 indicate a dramatic change in age-specific marriage rates over time. Marriage rates peaked in the early 1970s and this peak is evident for both males and females. In 1970, the

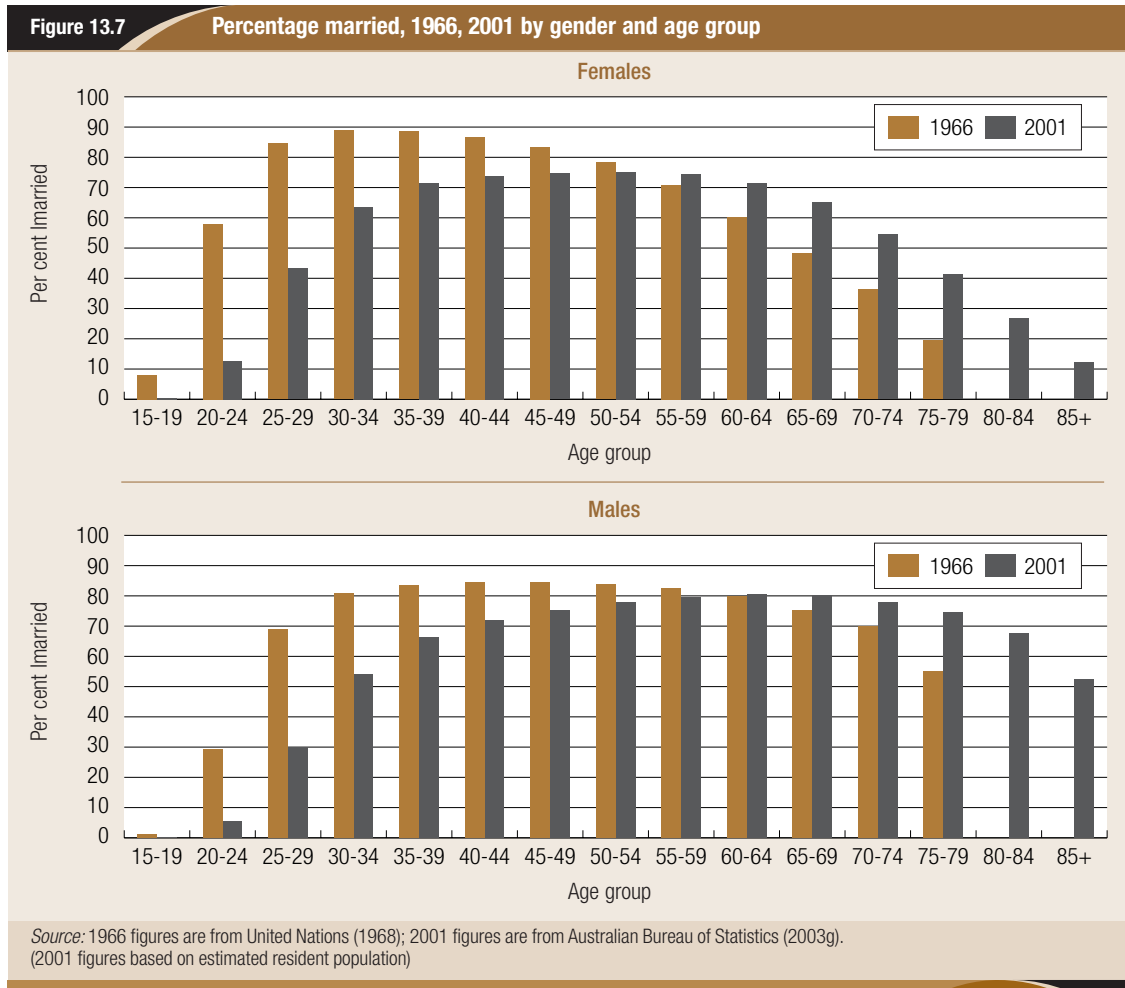


Table 13.3 Age-specific first marriage rates^a of males and females, 1921-2001

	1921	1940	1970	1985	2001
Males					
<19	3.3	4.8	15.3	2.8	0.9
20-24	69.0	95.7	171.6	68.6	23.1
25-29	136.2	181.0	181.9	113.6	66.5
30-34	109.5	134.1	99.9	98.7	63.1
35-39	70.0	81.9	49.3	77.8	38.4
40-44	36.3	45.8	27.5	60.4	21.1
45-49	22.1	27.3	15.5	47.0	11.1
50+	5.8	6.0	6.1	17.8	3.5
Females					
<19	25.4	35.2	68.2	17.9	4.2
20-24	128.4	187.2	290.4	120.4	42.3
25-29	138.7	198.9	187.6	128.3	83.2
30-34	82.6	104.2	95.1	93.8	65.2
35-39	43.3	54.5	46.5	66.4	33.0
40-44	23.3	26.0	23.1	48.3	16.6
45-49	12.6	14.2	15.3	34.1	9.3
50+	3.5	3.4	3.5	4.7	2.5

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Marriages and Divorces (various years).
^a per 1000 never married persons

overall marriage rate for females (regardless of age) was 110.1 per 1000 never married females. This compares with rates of 67.5 in 1921, 86.5 in 1940 and 39.7 in 2000. The same was true for males where overall marriage rates peaked around 1970 when 78 out of every 1000 never married males married. This figure was higher than the comparable figures in 1921 (53.4), 1940 (69.2) and 2000 (32).

Not only were marriage rates high in 1970, far more younger people were marrying. This is especially noticeable when examining the age-specific rates for those aged 15-19. In 1970, 68.2 per 1000 never married females in this age group got married. Among men the comparable figure was 15.3. These 1970 figures were far higher than in the earlier periods. Even more dramatic has been the virtual disappearance of teenage marriages in the 30 years since 1970. Among these young females the rates dropped from 68.2 in 1970 to 17.9 in 1985 to just 4.9 in 2000. Among males the drop has been from 15.3 in 1970 to 2.8 in 1985 to just one per 1000 in the year 2000.

This decline in first marriage rates has taken place in every age cohort for both males and females. In every age cohort the first marriage rates in 2000 are lower than in each of the four comparison years in Table 13.3. The decline in first marriage rates since 1970 is the most dramatic. Among these sharp declines, the following are particularly noteworthy:

- In 1970, the marriage rate for females in their early twenties was high by virtually any standards. For every 1000 never married females in their early twenties, 290 married in 1970 – more than one in four. Just 15 years later this had more than halved to 120.4 and 15 years on

again it had declined to 46.6 – which means that in 2000 less than 1 in 20 never married women aged 20-24 got married.

- A substantial, but less dramatic decline took place among women aged 25-29 where rates halved from 187.6 in 1970 to 90.2 in 2000.
- Among women aged 30 and over, there was an increase in first marriage rates between 1970 and 1985. For example, among 35-39 year old females the marriage rates increased from 46.5 in 1970 to 66.4 in 1985 before declining below 1970 levels in 2000 to a rate of 38.6. This pattern of an initial rise in first marriage rates among older women mainly reflects delays in first marriages between 1970 and 1985. The dramatic decline in the number of younger women marrying was reflected in the increase of older women marrying in 1985. However, the subsequent decline in marriage rates across all age groups after 1985 suggests a general decline in the proportion of people marrying at all.
- The patterns of marriage rate change among men is very similar to that among women. The main difference is that men marry for the first time at a later age than do women. This has not changed over the years.

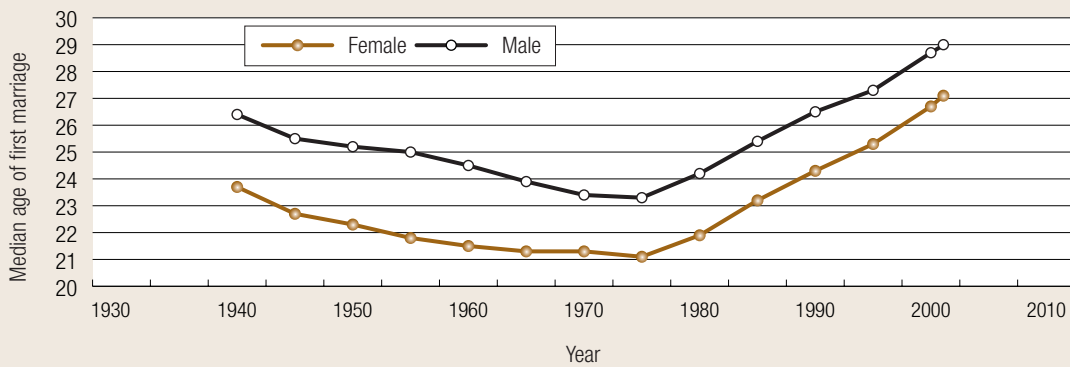
Changes in the age at which men and women first marry can be seen more readily by focusing on the median age at which they marry. Since the mid 1970s the median age at which both men and women have married for the first time has steadily increased (Figure 13.8). In 1975, men typically first married when they were 23.3 years old and women first married when they were 21.1 years old. By the year 2001, these typical ages of first marriage had increased substantially so that men married for the first time when they are 29.0 years old and women first married when they are 27.1 years old.

This increase since 1975 was a reversal of a trend to younger marriage that had been evident since at least 1940. In 1940, men were first marrying when they were 26.4 years old and women when they were 23.7. The age of first marriage steadily declined until 1975 when men and women were marrying at a very young age.

It is interesting to observe that over these 60 years of change in the age at which men and women married, there has been a remarkable stability in the average difference in the age gap of men and women when they marry. Between 1940-1975, brides were on average about three years younger than grooms. Since 1975 the average age gap between brides and grooms has narrowed slightly.

How many marriages are first marriages?

Following the 1975 Family Law Act, the divorce rate increased (p. 211-12). This means that there

Figure 13.8 Median age of first marriage by gender, 1940-2001

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (1997c, 2003g).

are more people available to remarry and this in turn means that fewer marriages will be first marriages and that more marriages will consist of people with quite different marital histories. These matters are discussed more fully later in this chapter.

Figure 13.9 reflects the declining percentage of marriages that are first marriages for both parties. In 1970, 86 per cent of all marriages consisted of both a bride and a groom who had never been married before. Soon after the introduction of the Family Law Act, just 68 per cent of first marriages were first marriages for both parties. This figure has remained stable since then.

How many people never marry?

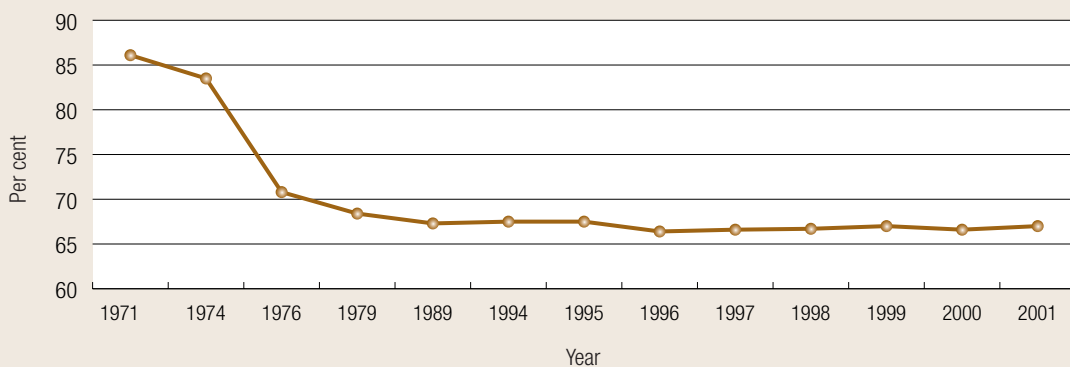
Only a small proportion of people never marry. The exact proportion of people who never marry can only be determined by examining the marital history of people when they die. However, since few people marry for the first time after the age of 60, a reasonable estimate of the proportion of the population who never marry can be obtained by examining the proportion of people aged 60 who have never married.

In 2001, for all the age groups over 60, 6.1 per cent of men and 4.2 per cent of women had never been married.

It comes as no surprise that the percentage that have never married declines steadily with age. While in 2001, 94.2 per cent of men and 86.9 per cent of women in their early twenties have never been married this drops sharply to 68.8 per cent of men and 53.9 per cent of women in their late twenties. By their early thirties only 41.4 per cent of men and 29.6 per cent of women had never married (Table 13.4).

Using the percentage of never married people at age 60-64 as an estimate of the proportion of the population that never marry, the level of never married people was considerably lower in 2001 than in 1911, 1947 and 1971.

However, the low level of never married people in 2001 partly reflects high levels of marriage in the 1960s and 1970s. Table 13.4 shows that in 1971, for the groups aged under 45, relatively few had never married. By 2001, considerably more men and women under the age of 45 had never married. Among younger people in 2001, the percentage

Figure 13.9 Per cent of marriages where neither party had ever been married, 1971-2001

Source: Pre-1980 figures are from Australian Bureau of Statistics (1980). Post-1980 data are from Australian Bureau of Statistics Marriages and Divorces (various issues).

Table 13.4 Per cent of men and women who were never married by age group, 1911-2001

	1911	1947	1971	2001
Men				
15-19	99.6	99.3	98.6	99.9
20-24	87.8	76.5	63.9	94.2
25-29	59.7	37.9	25.7	68.8
30-34	39.4	21.7	13.9	41.4
35-39	30.1	16.5	10.9	26.2
40-44	25.5	14.5	10.0	17.7
45-49	22.3	13.9	9.0	12.2
50-54	20.3	12.8	8.4	8.5
55-59	19.0	11.9	8.2	7.0
60-64	19.0	12.0	8.4	6.3
Women				
15-19	96.2	94.4	91.2	99.5
20-24	70.0	51.5	35.7	86.9
25-29	41.3	21.0	11.6	53.9
30-34	27.8	13.8	6.5	29.6
35-39	21.4	12.7	5.0	17.7
40-44	17.0	13.0	4.8	11.9
45-49	13.7	12.7	4.9	8.2
50-54	11.7	12.4	5.5	5.6
55-59	9.6	12.9	6.5	4.4
60-64	8.1	13.3	8.0	3.8

Sources: Census of the Commonwealth of Australia (1933 & 1947); Demography Bulletin 1971; ABS (2003g).

who had never married is much higher than in 1971 and the earlier years of 1911 and 1947. Among those in their thirties and early forties, the proportion in 2001 who had never been married had increased sharply since 1971 and had matched that in the earlier years or was moving towards the levels of earlier years.

Are church weddings on the way out?

In the year 2002 a minority of marriages were “church” weddings – that is were performed by a minister of religion. In 2002, 55 per cent of marriages were performed by a civil celebrant. This fact represents part of an ongoing decline in religious marriages since 1975 (Figure 13.10).

The decline no doubt partly reflects the increasing secularisation of Australia but it also is due to attractive alternatives to religious weddings being available. In 1975 a system of civil celebrants was introduced to provide people with a secular alternative to religious marriages. Prior to that time the only secular alternative was the rather unattractive and bureaucratic “registry office” marriage.

The decline in religious weddings is also related to the increasing number of marriages that include men or women who have been divorced. In some churches such remarriage is discouraged.

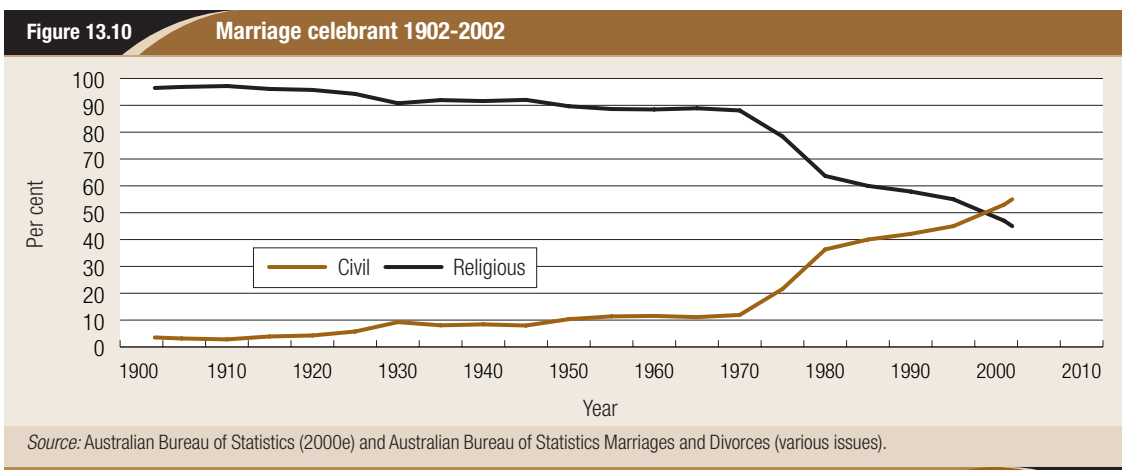
Are second marriages secular marriages?

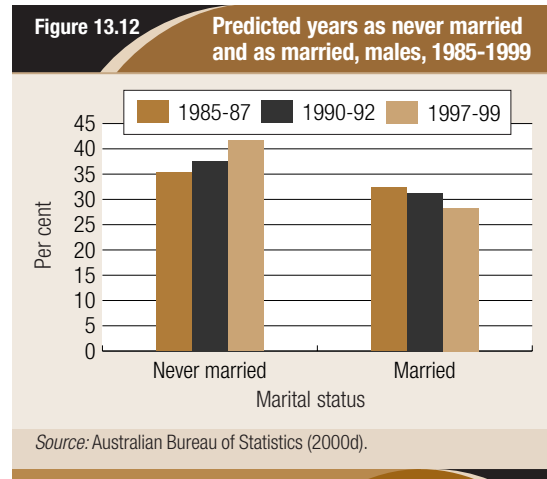
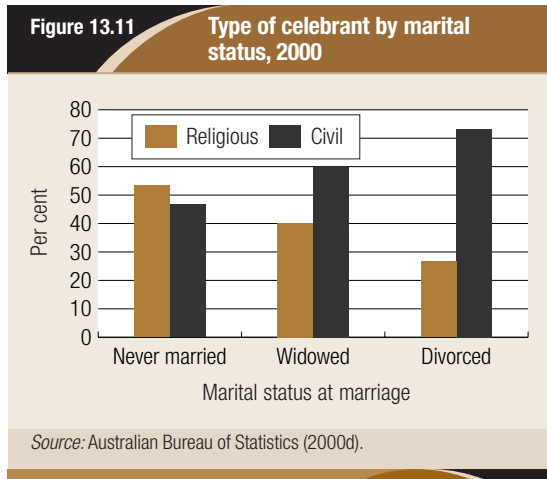
Civil celebrants dominate second marriages. In 2000, six out of every ten of those who remarried following widowhood used a civil celebrant. The use of civil celebrants is even more pronounced among those who remarry following divorce where, in 2000, almost three quarters (73.3 per cent) of such marriages employed a civil celebrant (Figure 13.11).

How long do marriages last?

Based on patterns prevailing in 1997-99, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has predicted that on average men and women who ever marry will spend 28.3 years and 28.9 years respectively as a married person. This represents a decline in the number of years for which they will be married based on predictions using the prevailing patterns in 1985-87. This decline largely reflects the increasing age at which people marry (Figure 13.12).

Figures 13.12 and 13.13 show that while the number of years that men and women spend married is declining, the average number of years that men and women are expected to be never married has increased. Based on 1997-99 patterns, men on average will spend 41.6 years as never married, and women will spend 39.8 years as never married. This does not mean that the typical age at which people marry will match these figures. The increasing average duration of being never married is due to men and women marrying at a later age and an increasing





proportion of people who never formally marry (thus inflating the figure). On average, men who *do* marry spend 29 years as never married and women who *do* marry spend 27 years as never married.

The increasing rate of men and women not marrying at all is reflected in the probability of people ever marrying. Table 13.5 reports ABS estimates of the probability of men and women ever marrying. Based on 1997-99 patterns, 71.4 per cent of men and 76.6 per cent of women born in 1997-99 are predicted to marry. These estimates indicate a decline in the chance of marrying compared to patterns that prevailed in 1985-87 when 79.3 per cent of men and 85.6 per cent of women were predicted to marry in their lifetime.

Delays in marriage, the risk of divorce (Chapter 15), an increasing reluctance to remarry following divorce (p. 177) and the increased acceptability of cohabitation means that a declining proportion of the adult life of men and women is spent as a married person. Based on patterns in 1985-87 it has been predicted that men who marry would spend 61.2 per cent of their adult life as a married man. However, based on 1997-99 figures this percentage has declined to just half (50.4 per cent) of their adult life. Among women the comparable figures

were 56.8 per cent (1985-87) and 46.8 per cent (1997-99).

How do marriages end: death or divorce?

About a third of marriages end in divorce (p. 210). The other two thirds end through the death of a partner. The experience of husbands and wives is very different in this regard.

Wives are far more likely to outlive their husband than their husband will outlive their wife. Of married women, 46 per cent outlive their husband and just 22 per cent of married men outlive their wife (Figure 13.14). The remainder divorce.

Mixed marriages – does like marry like?

Do men still marry younger women?

The consistent pattern throughout the 20th century has been for men to marry younger women (Qu 1998). On average, men are about two years older than women when they first marry. This gap has declined slightly since the mid-1970s when the men were, on average, about three years older than women when they first marry (see Figure 13.8).

The average age gap of those who remarry following divorce is a little greater with men, on average, being about three and a half years older than women when they remarry.

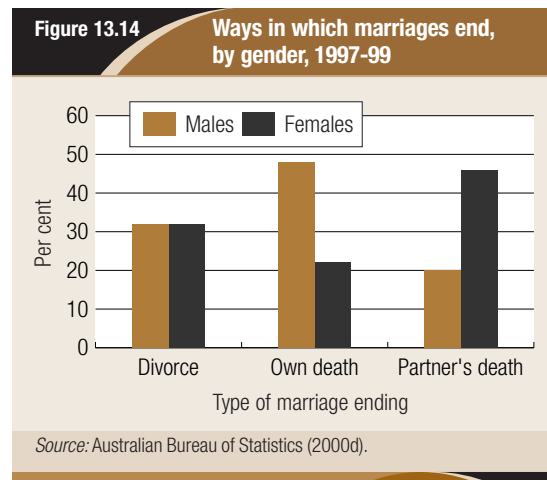
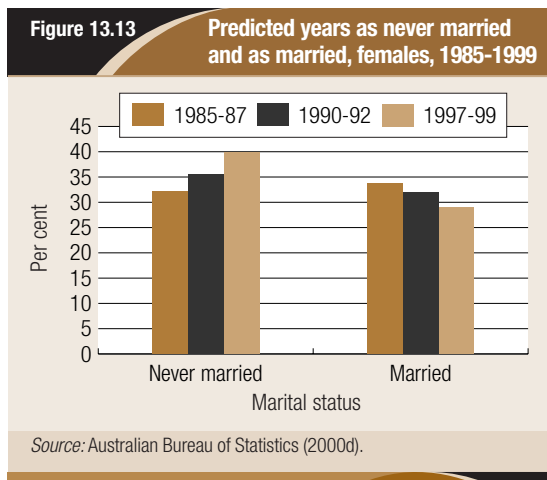


Table 13.5 Predicted proportion of life as married and probability of marrying

Based on trends in:	Proportion of life after age 20 in married state		Probability of ever marrying	
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
1985-87	61.2	56.8	79.3	85.6
1990-92	57.3	52.7	76.5	81.7
1997-99	50.4	46.8	71.4	76.6

Source: Derived from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000d).

These figures however, are averages and aggregate figures – they do not indicate the actual age gap between real couples. Figure 13.15 shows the age gap between couples who marry. In 1995, 28.7 per cent of men were at least five years older than the woman they married and a further 27.2 per cent were between two to four years older than their wife. Far fewer men marry older women. In 1995 just 5.5 per cent of men married a woman who was five or more years older than he was and a further 9.5 per cent married a woman who was between two to four years older than he was.

There is some evidence of a small change in the age gap between men and women who marry. In 1921, 36 per cent of men were five or more years older than the woman they married. By 1995, this had declined to just under 29 per cent. In 1921, about 62.5 per cent of men were at least two years older than their wife. By 1995, this had declined to 55 per cent. At the same time there are slightly more men who marry older women. In 1921, 12 per cent of men married a woman who was at least two years older than he was. By 1995, this had risen slightly to 15 per cent.

Do people find partners mainly within their own ethnic group?

There is a strong pattern whereby people marry within their own ethnic or cultural group. The

chances of marrying within one’s own ethnic or cultural group is affected by many factors including cultural prescriptions against marrying “out”, the availability of a suitable range of potential partners within one’s own group and the degree of integration of a particular ethnic group within the dominant culture.

Most Australian born men partner with an Australian born woman (88.9 per cent) and most Australian born women have an Australian born partner (85.9 per cent) (Table 13.6). This is hardly surprising since Australian born people represent by far the largest pool of potential partners.

Of those who were born outside Australia, far fewer have an Australian born partner. In general, those born outside Australia are much more likely to partner with someone born in the same country as themselves². For example:

- 72 per cent of partnered men and 83 per cent of women born in the Middle East or North Africa have a partner born in the same region.
- 74 per cent of partnered men and 85.7 per cent of women born in Greece had a Greek born partner.
- 62 per cent of partnered men born in Italy and 82 per cent of Italian born women had an Italian born partner.
- 90.9 per cent of partnered Vietnamese born men and 87.6 per cent of Vietnamese born women had a Vietnamese born partner.
- 85.6 per cent of partnered Chinese born men and 80.7 per cent of Chinese born women had a Chinese born partner.

However, there were exceptions to this general pattern. Men and women born in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Ireland all had relatively high rates of marriage to Australian born partners (Table 13.6). This comes as little surprise given the cultural

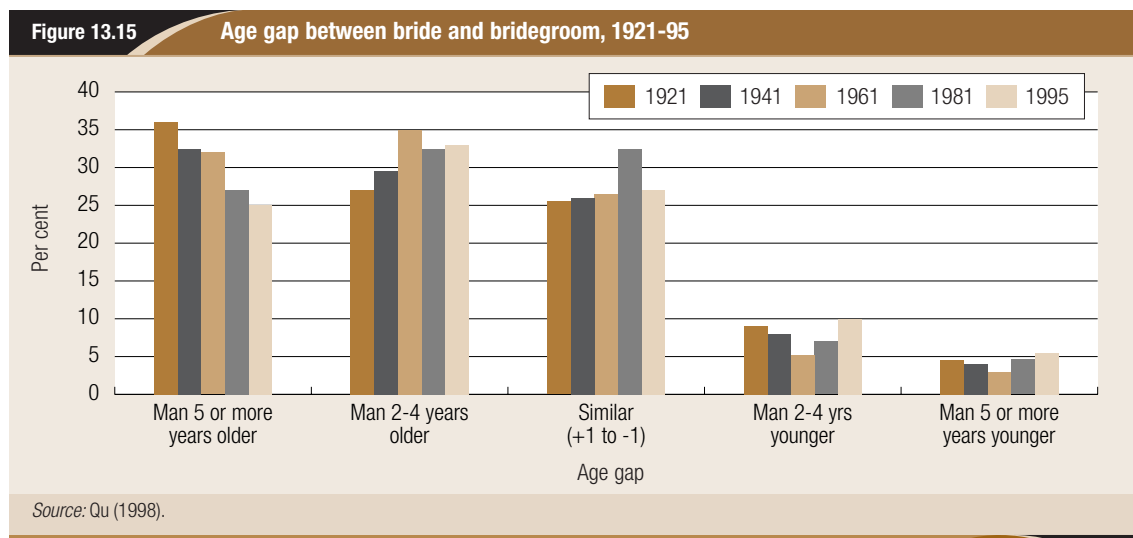


Table 13.6 Ethnic backgrounds of partnered adults, 2001

	Male partner born in: (% of males)													
	Australia %	New Zealand %	UK %	Ireland %	M. East & North Africa %	Greece %	Italy %	Philippines %	Vietnam %	China %	Other Asia %	Other Stn Europe %	Eastern Europe %	W & Nth Europe %
Female partner born in:														
Australia	88.1	44.3	46.9	41.7	18.3	18.5	28.4	7.1	1.4	4.4	13.6	19.4	20.5	46.8
Same country as male	41.0	31.4	42.0	31.4	72.1	74.3	62.3	89.5	90.9	85.6	75.9	69.6	60.0	32.5
Different country to male (but not Australia)	11.9	14.8	11.2	26.9	9.7	7.2	9.3	3.4	7.6	9.9	10.6	11.0	19.5	20.7
Male partner born in:														
Australia	85.9	40.8	42.5	32.8	9.5	7.7	12.1	38.1	3.5	7.8	18.4	11.8	16.2	39.4
Same country as female	43.0	36.4	47.4	36.4	83.0	85.7	82.0	38.6	87.6	80.7	67.2	79.2	67.7	37.9
Different country to female (but not Australia)	14.1	16.2	10.1	30.8	7.5	6.6	5.9	23.3	8.9	11.6	14.4	9.0	16.1	22.7

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census, special data cube. Excludes inadequately described, unmatched, at sea

similarity between these countries. Another notable exception is the pattern of Philippine born women. While Philippine born men mainly partner with Philippine born women (89.5 per cent) a relatively high proportion of Philippine born women have Australian born partners. Of partnered Philippine born women 38.1 per cent had an Australian born partner and 38.6 per cent had a Philippine born partner.

Is religion a barrier to choice of partners?

Although Australia is a relatively secularised country religion still appears to continue to play a role in the choice of partner³. Certainly partners are likely to indicate the same religious preference as each other. Table 13.7 shows that in most religious groups at least 60 per cent of partnered men and women had a partner of the same religious persuasion as themselves. In most smaller religious groups there was a much higher degree of religious similarity between partners where around 80 per cent of people had a partner from the same religious group as themselves. Whether or not this degree of religious similarity is because people select partners of the same religious persuasion or because partners change to adopt the same religious persuasion as their partner is not entirely clear.

Earlier in the 20th century religious divides were deep and sharp – especially the divide between Catholics and Protestants. Does this divide continue and is it reflected in marital choice? Although Catholics largely marry other Catholics (65 per cent of partnered male Catholics and 62 per cent of female Catholics do so) quite a few marry Protestants. In 2001, 18 per cent of partnered male Catholics had an Anglican partner with a further 10.5 per cent of partners identifying with another

Table 13.7 Per cent of partnered adults whose partner expressed the same religious preference, 2001

	Males	Females
Catholic	64.9	61.7
Anglican	61.2	60.0
Uniting Church	60.4	53.9
Presbyterian	39.5	41.6
Lutheran	51.9	50.2
Baptist	67.9	64.1
Greek Orthodox	80.1	83.4
Other Orthodox	81.8	83.5
Pentecostal	94.1	85.1
Other Christian	80.4	72.8
Jewish	81.0	83.6
Islamic	91.0	94.1
Buddhist	83.9	76.7
Other Religion	82.1	78.5
No Religion	61.9	78.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census, special data cube. Excludes not stated, inadequately described, no matches

Table 13.8 Educational similarity of male and female partners, 2001

Male (% of males)			
	Degree or Higher %	Diploma or Certificate %	None %
Female partner has:			
Degree or Higher	53.1	13.6	6.5
Diploma or Certificate	23.2	29.1	10.3
None	23.7	57.4	83.3
Female (% of females)			
Male partner has:			
Degree or Higher	52.4	19.9	6.1
Diploma or Certificate	29.2	54.5	32.2
None	18.4	25.5	61.8

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census, special data cube. Excluded: Education inadequately described, not stated or no matches

Protestant denomination. Of partnered Anglican males 21.5 per cent had a Catholic partner. Of partnered Anglican females 18 per cent had a Catholic partner.

Do women partner with men who are more highly educated than themselves?

There is a tendency for partners to have a similar level of education. In the 2001 Census 59 per cent of all partnered adults had a partner with a similar level of education to themselves. However, when partners had different levels of education the male partner was much more likely to have the higher level. For example of partnered men, 28 per cent had higher education than their female partner. Only 13 per cent of women had higher education than their male partner. The same basic pattern applies across the various age groups.

The extent of educational similarity between partners can be illustrated by looking at those with

Table 13.9 Mean ratings^(a) of what is important for a successful marriage

Aspect of marriage	Mean
Faithfulness	9.6
Good communication	9.5
Mutual respect	9.5
Understanding and tolerance	9.1
Happy sexual relationship	8.4
Sharing household chores	7.6
Interests in common	7.2
Adequate income	7.1
Independence	6.6
Having children	6.0
Putting partner's wishes first	5.8
Similar social background	5.5
Shared religious beliefs	4.6
Agreement on politics	2.7

Source: de Vaus (1997b) using data from Australian Family Values Survey. (a) All scores are means on a scale of 0 (aspect of no importance) through to 10 (aspect of extreme importance)

degrees and those without any qualifications (Table 13.8). Of partnered men with a degree or higher degree, 53 per cent had a partner who also had at least a degree. Of partnered women with at least a degree, 52 per cent had a partner with a degree.

Conversely, of partnered men who had no post-school qualifications, 83 per cent had a partner who also had no post-school qualification. Of partnered women without post-school qualifications 62 per cent had a partner without post-school qualifications.

What makes for a successful marriage?⁴

Recent years have seen increasing diversity in relationship patterns and a reasonably high level of marriage and relationship breakdown. The Australian Family Values Survey asked Australian men and women to identify the things they thought were important for a successful marriage.

Table 13.9 indicates the mean responses for all survey respondents on a scale of 0 through to 10 with a higher score indicating greater importance for a particular attribute. Several points are worth highlighting:

- By far the most important attributes stressed were faithfulness, communication, respect and understanding and tolerance.
- A good sexual relationship was seen as a relatively important component of a successful marriage.
- Having children and independence in marriage were ranked relatively low, as were having similar political, religious and social beliefs.

Do women stress different marriage attributes than men?

It is often asserted that many of the difficulties that arise in marriage occur because of different expectations held by men and women. An examination of the weight that men and women in the Australian Family Values Survey placed on each of the various attributes required for a successful marriage indicated that:

- Men and women attached similar importance to faithfulness, a good sexual relationship and adequate income.
- Women rated communication, respect, independence, understanding and tolerance, having interests in common, and having a similar background more highly than men.
- Men placed a little more weight than women on putting their partner's wishes first and having children.
- In general, gender differences were more evident for those aged in their thirties and forties.

Do younger people look for different things in a marriage?

It has also been observed that young people approach marriage in ways that are different from those of their parents' generation. The Australian Family Values Survey looked at the extent to which age influenced the perceived importance of particular attributes in marriage.

- Age had no influence on the importance attached to attributes which are about treating one's partner as a valued person – attributes such as faithfulness, mutual respect, understanding and tolerance and independence.
- The older people were, the greater importance they placed on social background, shared religious and political beliefs, having children, putting a partner's wishes first and having adequate income.
- The younger people were, the greater the emphasis they placed on maintaining separateness and difference in marriage, good communication and sharing household tasks.

In summary, there was clear evidence that the marriage expectations of younger people differed in important ways to those of the older age groups. Whether this reflects changing expectations of modern marriage or simply changing expectations as people grow older, is impossible to tell from these survey results.

What do Australians think about sex outside of marriage?

According to the International Social Science Surveys in Australia in 1996 and 1998, the acceptance of cohabitation is matched by a widespread acceptance of sex outside of marriage – but only under certain conditions. Consistent with the acceptance of cohabitation, only 18 per cent of adults disapproved of premarital sex where the couple is in love. Among younger age groups (20-49) less than 10 per cent disapproved of premarital

sex where the couple is in love. This disapproval doubles to 19 per cent among those in their fifties and doubles again to 39 per cent among those aged seventy or over (Table 13.10).

However, acceptance of premarital sex among those who are in love does not mean that non marital sex is approved of under all circumstances. A third of adults disapproved of premarital sex if a couple is attracted but not in love and almost 60 per cent disapproved of casual premarital sex. Almost 90 per cent condemned extramarital sex (Table 13.10).

Older people tend to be more conservative than younger people regarding non marital sex and most other matters discussed in this chapter. For example, only a third of those in their twenties disapproved of casual sex compared to 53 per cent of those in their forties and three quarters of those in their sixties. Similarly, just 18 per cent of those in their twenties disapproved of sex between those who are attracted but not in love while a third of those in their fifties and half of those in their sixties expressed disapproval of sex under these circumstances. However, the vast majority of all age groups disapproved of extramarital sex.

According to the same surveys, women were also more conservative in these regards than are men. For example:

- Two thirds of women compared to just half the men disapproved of casual sex.
- 39 per cent of women and 29 per cent of men disapproved of sex between people who are attracted but not in love.
- Extramarital sex was disapproved of by 93 per cent of women but by just 85 per cent of men.

Partnering

In addition to the 52 per cent of the population aged over 15 who are legally married, an additional 7.3 per cent were cohabiting in 2001. Given the rise

Table 13.10 Attitudes to sex outside of marriage (per cent agreeing with statement)

	All	Gender		Age					
		Male	Female	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
Premarital sex always or normally wrong (1998) ¹	24	23	25	13	10	15	17	35	41***
Disapprove of casual premarital sex (1996) ²	58	49	67***	35	40	53	62	75	85***
Disapprove of premarital sex if attracted but not in love (1996) ²	34	29	39***	18	22	28	35	51	54***
Disapprove of premarital sex even if in love (1996) ²	18	19	18	8	8	10	19	32	39***
Sex before marriage is not acceptable (2001) ³	11.4	11.1	11.8				4		
Having an affair when in a committed relationship is wrong (2001) ³	77.6	77.5	77.7				4		

Source: ¹ International Social Science Survey, Australia, 1998

² International Social Science Survey, Australia, 1996

³ Australian Study of Health and Relationships, 2001

⁴ Breakdown of attitudes by age group were not available

***p<.001

Table 13.11 Relationship status of men and women 1986-2001 by age group

Age	Women						Men					
	Married		Partnered ^a		Not partnered ^b		Married		Partnered ^a		Not partnered	
	1986 %	1996 %	2001 %	1986 %	1996 %	2001 %	1986 %	1996 %	2001 %	1986 %	1996 %	2001 %
20-24	30	14	11	39	27	24	14	6	4	20	15	13
25-29	61	44	37	67	57	53	47	31	25	53	43	41
30-34	72	61	55	77	70	66	65	52	47	71	62	59
35-39	76	67	62	80	73	70	73	63	57	77	70	66
40-44	77	69	64	79	74	71	76	67	62	79	73	69
45-49	76	69	65	78	73	70	77	70	65	79	75	71

Source: 1986 and 1996 figures from Birrell and Rapson (1998) based on special tables from full 1986 and 1996 Census; 2001 figures from full 2001 Census and kindly provided by Birrell and Rapson.
 Population includes domestic visitors and people in non private dwellings but excludes same-sex relationships and international visitors
^a includes married and de facto
^b currently not partnered, includes sole parents

in cohabitation, a fuller understanding of contemporary patterns of partnering needs to take account of cohabitation as well as marriage.

Are fewer people partnering than previously?

Since detailed information about people living in cohabiting relationships has only been collected in recent years, the following analysis focuses on people cohabiting and living in legal marriages between 1986 and 2001.

Table 13.11 provides a detailed picture of the percentage of adults living with a partner. It shows the percentage who are married, the percentage who have a partner (married or cohabiting) and the percentage without a partner. The table shows figures separately for men and women for each age group. Percentages are provided for 1986, 1996 and 2001 to provide an idea of changes in partnering levels in this 15 year period. A number of important facts are contained in this table.

First, in the 10 years from 1986-1996 there was a marked decline in the percentage of men and women who were married. This decline occurred in all age groups but is especially dramatic among those in their twenties. The decline in the percentage of younger people who were married partly reflects delays in marriage. However, the decline in the percentage of the older groups that were married indicates that it is more than just marital delays that are operating.

Some of the decline between 1986-1996 in the percentage of married people among the older age groups may reflect marital breakdown but it is unlikely that all the decline in older marriage is due to marriage dissolution.

Second, some of the decline in marriage will reflect the different ways in which relationships are formed. It will partly reflect a move from marriage to cohabitation. When the percentage with a partner (married or cohabiting) is examined, the decline in partnering between 1986-1996 is much less than the decline in marriage. For example, among women in their late twenties there was a 25 per cent decline in marriage but only a 15 per cent decline in being partnered.

Third, while combining cohabiting relationships with marriages shows a smaller decline in the extent to which men and women were living with a partner, it is nevertheless the case that in all age groups there was a consistent decline between 1986-1996 in the percentage of men and women living with a partner. While this decline is sharper for people in their twenties it is not restricted to them. There were still notable declines in the percentage who had a partner among the older age groups. These are very substantial changes over the ten year period from 1986-1996.

Fourth, the flip side of the decline in having a partner has been the rise between 1986-1996 in the percentage of men and women in all age groups who were living without a partner. The “not partnered” columns in Table 13.11 indicate the extent of this change. Among women there was a 21 per cent to 35 per cent increase between 1986-1996 in non-partnered women (depending on the age group examined). Furthermore, in 1996 three quarters of women in their early twenties were without a partner. By their later twenties 43 per cent were unpartnered while over a quarter of women in their thirties and forties were unpartnered.

Among men similar increases in being unpartnered occurred among those aged 25 and over. In these age groups there was a 19 per cent to 35 per cent increase from 1986 to 1996 in the rates of being unpartnered. Among men in their late twenties 57 per cent were unpartnered in 1996 and 38 per cent of those in their early thirties were without a partner. Even among those in their forties more than a quarter were without a partner.

Finally, the changes from 1986-1996 in the proportion of partnered people in all age groups has continued through to 2001. While the rate of change seems to have slowed among those in their twenties, the rate of decline in partnering among those aged thirty or over seems to be continuing at the same pace as observed between 1986-1996.

Which types of men and women are unpartnered and which types have partners?

Having a partner will depend on a person’s desire to have a partner, their ability to find and attract a suitable partner and their ability to sustain the relationship. Finding a partner will depend on finding a “suitable” partner. But what defines suitable? In social terms there is a strong tendency towards homogamy (p. 169-72) – that is, for partners to have similar religious, age, educational, occupational and ethnic backgrounds. Within a general context of homogamy, Western marriages generally reflect a marriage gradient in relation to age, education, occupation and income of male and female partners (Bernard 1972). The marriage gradient is a term applied to the phenomenon whereby men tend to marry women who are slightly “below” them in terms of age, education, income and occupation. Generally the gaps between men and women are not great but the *direction* of the gaps is that men tend to marry “down” and women tend to marry “up”.

The marriage gradient will mean that there will always be a group of women at the “top” who cannot marry up since there are too few available men higher up. Similarly, at the bottom of the social hierarchy will be a group of men who cannot marry down since there are too few available women at a lower social level. This phenomenon

means that there will be a group of women with high education, good jobs and good income who find it hard to locate a suitable partner because of too few men with higher education, job prospects and income. Bernard calls these women the “cream of the crop”. Conversely, the men with low education, income and poor work prospects who are unable to attract suitable female partners are labelled the “bottom of the barrel” (See also Birrell and Rapson, 1998 who have explored this idea in detail in the Australian context).

If this marriage gradient model is correct we would expect that:

- Among men, the lower their social standing, the more likely they are to be without a partner. That is, men with lower incomes, lower status occupations, more marginal workforce attachment and lower education will be the most likely to be without a partner (the “bottom of the barrel”).
- Among women, the higher their social standing, the more likely they are to be without a partner (the “cream of the crop”).

Which men seem to be the most in demand?

Are employed men more able to partner?

Men in the full time workforce are considerably more likely to be partnered than those who either work part time or are not in the labour force. Table 13.12 clearly demonstrates this pattern within each age group.

Table 13.12 reports the percentage of *not partnered* men. These figures show that:

- Regardless of their age group men who were fully employed were the *least* likely to be without a partner.
- In most age groups the fully employed were more than twice as likely as the not employed to have a partner.
- Part time employed males were more likely than fully employed to be without a partner but less

Table 13.12 Per cent of males, not partnered by workforce participation and age group, 2001

	Employed full time %	Employed part time %	Not employed %
25-29	49.6	61.3	75.6
30-34	30.8	42.0	61.4
35-39	23.1	33.5	53.3
40-44	20.3	30.5	50.4
45-49	18.9	28.6	46.9

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census, special data cube.
Note: excludes visitors and people in non private dwellings since it is difficult to estimate their partnered status. These figures are therefore not exactly comparable to those in Table 13.11 where the population specification was changed for the sake of consistency across years

likely than the not employed to be without a partner.

- Men in all the age groups reported in Table 13.12 who were not employed had the highest rates of being without a partner.

These figures indicate that men who are not likely to be good “breadwinners” are much less likely to have a partner. Not having a partner may be because these men are not seen by women to be a viable partner, they do not feel able to support a partner, they cannot keep a partner or they do not wish to have a partner.

Do the high income earning men find it easier to find a partner?

The same general pattern emerges in relation to the income that men earn.

Table 13.13 shows that in each age group, the higher the male’s income the more likely they were to be partnered. The key figures are contained in each column of the table.

- In each age group, those earning over \$1000 per year were the *least* likely to be without a partner.

- In each age group those in the two lower income levels (below \$400 per week) had much higher levels of being unpartnered.
- In most age groups, the men who earned most were at least twice as likely to have a partner as those who earned least.

Does education improve a man’s chances of finding a partner?

Similar patterns are observed in relation to education as were observed regarding the impact of employment and income levels of partnering among men. Three main points are evident in Table 13.14:

- Men who had post-school educational qualifications had lower rates of non partnering than those without qualifications.
- The impact of education begins to appear in partnering levels of men aged 30 and older.
- The particular level of post-school qualification does not seem to matter. The main point is that men with *any* post-school qualifications are less likely to be without a partner than those with no such qualifications.

In summary, men with a full time job, a reasonable income and some qualifications were more likely than those without these attributes to have a partner. The men who were not good prospects as breadwinners (no full time job, low income and no qualifications) were considerably less likely to have a partner.

Does higher education reduce a woman’s chance of finding a partner?

We cannot follow the same strategy to analyse the marriage gradient model among women. Since marriage reduces the likelihood of women working full time and consequently lowers their income levels we cannot disentangle the effect of income and working on the marriage prospects of women.

However, since education is less directly affected by marriage than is income or workforce participation,

Table 13.13 Per cent of males, *not* partnered by weekly income and age group, 2001

	Weekly income				
	Below \$199 %	\$200-\$499 %	\$500-\$699 %	\$700-\$999 %	\$1000+ %
25-29	73.1	66.8	52.4	46.1	43.3
30-34	55.1	50.6	35.9	29.2	25.0
35-39	43.9	42.3	28.8	22.8	17.9
40-44	39.1	38.5	25.8	21.3	15.8
45-49	34.7	36.5	23.8	20.1	15.3

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census, special data cube.
Note: excludes visitors and people in non private dwellings since it is difficult to estimate their partnered status. These figures are therefore not exactly comparable to those in Table 13.11 where the population specification was changed for the sake of consistency across years

Table 13.14 Per cent of males, *not* partnered by educational qualifications and age group, 2001

	Highest post-school qualification			
	Degree or Higher %	Diploma %	Certificate %	None %
25-29	58.9	56.3	47.5	59.2
30-34	33.7	32.9	31.0	42.0
35-39	22.3	23.4	24.4	35.1
40-44	18.7	20.7	22.7	31.9
45-49	18.2	20.0	21.9	29.3

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census, special data cube.
Note: excludes visitors and people in non private dwellings since it is difficult to estimate their partnered status. These figures are therefore not exactly comparable to those in Table 13.11 where the population specification was changed for the sake of consistency across years

Table 13.15 Per cent of females, *not* partnered by educational qualifications and age group, 2001

	Highest post-school qualification			
	Degree or Higher %	Diploma %	Certificate %	None %
25-29	47.2	44.2	42.0	42.4
30-34	30.5	29.8	30.5	30.9
35-39	24.8	25.8	26.8	27.3
40-44	25.1	25.5	27.1	26.9
45-49	27.8	26.8	27.2	26.3

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census, special data cube.
Note: excludes visitors and people in non private dwellings since it is difficult to estimate their partnered status. These figures are therefore not exactly comparable to those in Table 13.11 where the population specification was changed for the sake of consistency across years

we can look at the impact of education levels on the marriage and partnering rates of women.

Table 13.15 shows that in 2001, a woman's level of education made virtually no difference to her chances of being partnered or without a partner. While the marriage gradient model would suggest that those with high levels of education might be more likely to be unpartnered this was not the case.

Table 13.16 compares the percentages of men and women with a diploma, degree or higher who were living without a partner. It shows that men aged 35 and over with these higher qualifications were less likely to be without a partner than similarly aged women with such qualifications.

Why are fewer people partnering?

Table 13.11 reported the decline in levels of partnering in all age groups among both men and women. How can this decline be explained?

Birrell and Rapson (1998) developed a resources model to help explain the marriage patterns of men and women and the changes in partnering over the ten year period from 1986-1996. Their argument implicitly uses the notion of the marriage gradient.

The marriage gradient might be useful in explaining the decline in partnering over the decade from 1986-1996. If the size of the women in the "cream of the crop" group increased and the size of the male "bottom of the barrel" group increased then there would be larger groups of men and women not able to find suitable partners.

The decade from 1986-1996 was a period of substantial and rapid economic restructuring that altered the nature of the Australian workforce. This restructuring had quite different consequences for men and women. It saw a decline in the workforce participation of men and an increase in that of women.

Although men maintained a higher rate of workforce participation than women, the *relative* position of men and women changed sharply in this 10 year period. The relative advantage of men declined. This would mean, in relative terms, that there would be more women who could fall into the "cream of the crop" category and more men in the "bottom of the barrel" category.

This means that the increase in non partnered men and women could at least be partly due to increased female resources and diminished male resources. This reduces the need of women to marry and reduces the capacity of a man to attract a marriage partner (Birrell and Rapson, 1998).

Remarriage

In 2000, 34 per cent of all marriages involved at least one partner who had previously been married – up from 1967 when the comparable figure was just 14 per cent. In 2000, 15 per cent of

Table 13.16

Per cent of those with a diploma or higher qualification that do NOT have a partner by gender and age group, 2001

	Age group				
	25-29 %	30-34 %	35-39 %	40-44 %	45-49 %
Male	58.2	33.5	22.6	19.3	18.7
Female	46.4	30.3	25.1	25.2	27.5

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census, special data cube.
Note: excludes visitors and people in non private dwellings since it is difficult to estimate their partnered status. These figures are therefore not exactly comparable to those in Table 13.11 where the population specification was changed for the sake of consistency across years

all marriages were of two previously married people and a further 19 per cent of marriages included one person who was remarrying.

Is remarriage going out of date?

Earlier it was observed that age-related rates of first marriage have declined sharply since 1976. Figures 13.16 and 13.17 display the age-related *remarriage* rates for previously married men and women. Several points stand out.

The first is that the same pattern of decline has occurred in regard to remarriage rates as with first marriage rates. Men and women who have been widowed or divorced were far less likely to remarry in 2001 than they were in 1976. For example, in 1976 the remarriage rate among previously married women in their late twenties was 278 per 1000. By 2001 the comparable rate had dropped by two thirds to 119 per 1000. Among similar men the comparable decline in remarriage was even sharper dropping from 341.8 per 1000 in 1976 to 101.4 per 1000 in 2001.

While the remarriage rates in 1976 are probably inflated due to the formalisation of many divorces after the introduction of the Family Law Act in 1975, the decline in remarriage rates from 1976 is very similar to the decline in first marriage rates.

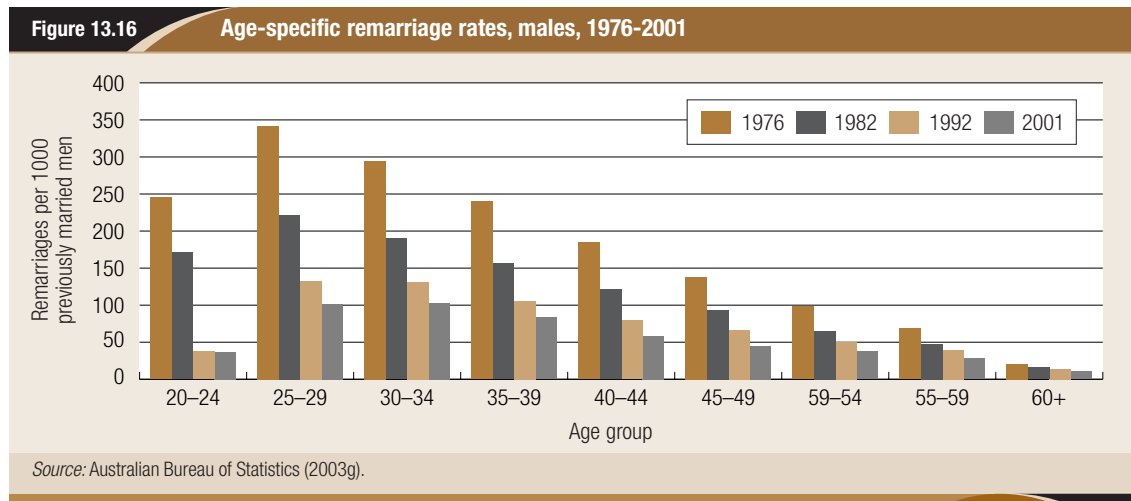
The second point that emerges from Figures 13.16 and 13.17 is that generally, the younger a previously married person is, the more likely they are to

Table 13.17

Likelihood of remarriage by gender and marital history

	Percentage of divorcees remarrying		Percentage of widowers/widows remarrying	
	Men %	Women %	Men %	Women %
1985-87	71.0	61.5	12.3	5.3
1990-92	67.4	57.9	10.5	4.3
1997-99	58.2	48.7	8.3	3.2

Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000d.



remarry. Among men, the rate of remarriage declines from the age of 30 onwards. For women the remarriage rate declines from 25 onwards.

In any age group, previously married people are more likely to remarry than are never married men and women. That is, the experience of previously being married does not make these people more reluctant to remarry than their never married peers. For example, among previously married males aged 25-29, the remarriage rate in 2001 was 101.4 per 1000. The comparable first marriage rate was 66.5. The rate for previously married men in their late thirties was 83.5 per 1000 compared to the comparable first marriage rate of 38.4. The same pattern applies among women. For example, of previously married women aged 25-29 in 2001, 112.4 remarried in 2001. The comparable rate for first marriages was 83.2.

How old are people when they remarry after divorce?

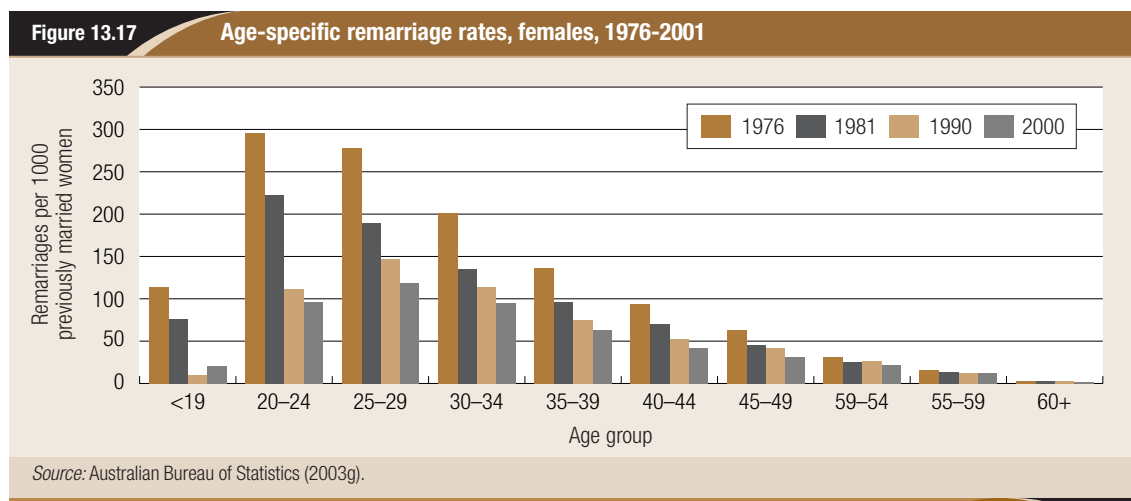
The age of remarriage following divorce has increased steadily in line with the increasing age of first marriages and the subsequent increased age of divorce. Three points emerge from Figure 13.18 in

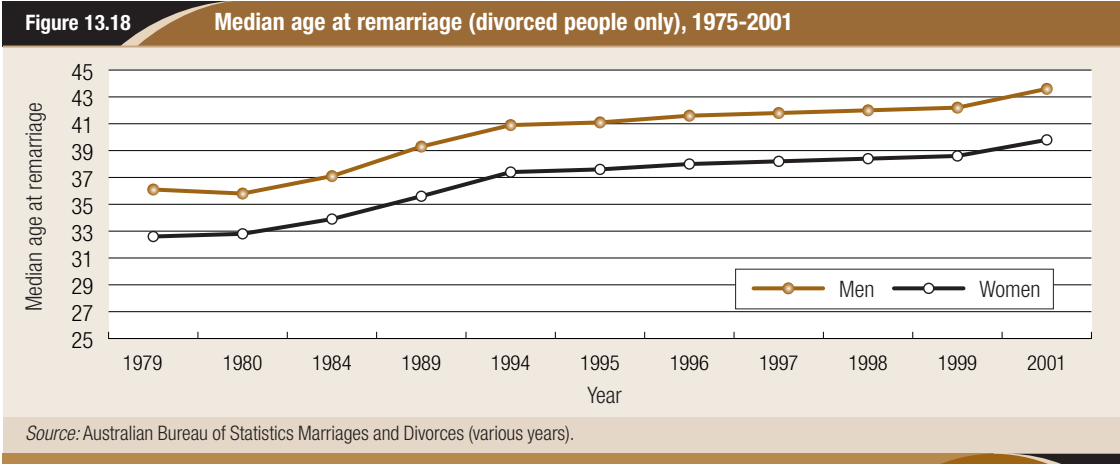
relation to the age at which men and women remarry:

- In 2001 the median age of remarriage was 43.6 years for men and 39.8 for women.
- The median age of remarriage following divorce has increased by 7.5 years for men and 7.2 years for women since 1978. This increase is largely consistent with the increases in the age at which people marry for the first time.
- The gap between the median age of remarrying men and remarrying women was 3.8 years in 2001. Over the period 1978 to 2001 this gap has consistently been between 3.2 and 3.8 years. This is a greater age gap than for first marriages where the comparable age gap in 2001 was 2 years.

How many remarry?

The chances of remarrying after a marriage has ended, depends very much on whether the marriage ended by divorce or by the death of a partner. Divorcees are far more likely to remarry than widows. Table 13.17 provides the ABS estimates of the percentage of divorcees and widowed people who will remarry. This table shows that among divorcees:





- 58.2 per cent of divorced males would eventually remarry if the 1997-99 remarriage rates persist. This is a much lower percentage rate of remarriage than applied on the basis of remarriage patterns in 1985-87 when 71 per cent were predicted to remarry.
- Fewer divorced women are predicted to remarry than divorced men. Using 1997-99 patterns, 48.7 per cent of divorced women are predicted to remarry eventually.

The reasons for the lower likelihood of divorced women remarrying are not certain. It is not clear to what extent this is due to divorced women being more reluctant than men to remarry or whether they are less attractive marriage prospects because of the responsibilities for children that they frequently have.

Widowed men and women have low rates of remarriage. Based on 1997-99 patterns just 8.3 per cent of widowed men and 3.2 per cent of widowed women are expected to remarry. The lower rate of remarriage of widowed women is substantially due to the greater longevity of women and the simple fact that there are not enough men of the right age available to remarry.

Who do people remarry?

Two thirds of marriages are between two people who have not previously been married. Most never married men (88.4 per cent) who marry, marry a woman who also has never been married (Table 13.18).

- Widowed people who remarry are far more likely to remarry another widow than are people with different marital histories. For example, of widowed men who remarry 35.6 per cent remarried another widow. Very few never married or divorced men marry widows.
- Divorced people who remarry frequently remarry another divorced person. Of all divorced men who remarried 53.7 per cent remarried another divorced person.

- Of all marriages, 12.4 per cent were between two divorced people.
- 17.8 per cent of marriages are of a divorcee and a never married.

Table 13.18 Marital status of brides and grooms at remarriage, 2001

Never married groom		
	Of never married grooms %	Of all grooms %
Bride		
Never married	88.4	66.3
Widowed	0.5	0.4
Divorced	11.1	8.3
Total	79033	75.0

Widowed Groom		
	Of Widowed grooms %	Of all grooms %
Bride		
Never married	13.8	0.3
Widowed	35.6	0.7
Divorced	50.6	1.0
Total	2072	2.0

Divorced groom		
	Of Divorced grooms %	Of all grooms %
Bride		
Never married	41.1	9.5
Widowed	5.1	1.2
Divorced	53.7	12.4
Total	24330	23.1

Source: Derived from Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003g.

Table 13.19 Remarriages involving children from previous marriages, 2002

Has children?	Males		Females	
	Widowed %	Divorced %	Widowed %	Divorced %
No children	89.6	66.3	85.2	64.8
Has children under the age of 16	10.4	33.7	14.8	35.2

Source: Derived from Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003h.

How many remarriages include children?

Two thirds of people who remarry do not have any children under the age of 16. There are three main reasons why so many remarrying men and women do not have younger children.

- Many people are remarrying after their children are older than 16 (Table 13.19). Most widowed people who remarry will be in this position as will many divorced people.
- Many divorces occur before people have children.
- Many people who have children may not be remarrying – at least while their children are under the age of 16.
- In many step and blended families the partners cohabit rather than remarry.

Endnotes

- 1 The first part of this section is reproduced from de Vaus, Qu and Weston (2003).
- 2 Of course many of these couples will have married prior to arriving in Australia. Unfortunately data were not available to distinguish between those who married before migrating and those who married after arriving in Australia.
- 3 Of course this will not apply to those who married outside Australia in countries where religion and religious similarity are extremely important considerations in the choice of marital partner.
- 4 This section is adapted from de Vaus (1997b) "Marriage" in de Vaus and Wolcott (1997).

Highlights

- 52 per cent of the population aged 15 or over were married in 2001. This represents part of an ongoing decline since 1971.
- The percentage of the population that is currently married is higher than it was 100 years ago.
- Nevertheless, about three quarters of adults currently marry at some point in their life.
- An increasing proportion of the population now never marries. In 2001 about a third of the 15+ population had never married compared to 25 per cent in 1976.
- The current proportion of the population that have never married is still considerably lower than it was at the beginning of the 20th century when 47 per cent had never married.
- The recent rise in the percentage who have never married is due to delays in marriage, increasing cohabitation and an increase in people not partnering at all.
- Australia's crude marriage rates in 2002 were 5.4 marriages per 1000 people.
- Marriage rates have fallen steadily since the early 1970s.
- Despite the declining marriage rates most Australians still regard marriage as a relevant contemporary institution.
- In recent decades, both men and women are increasingly delaying marriage. This has meant that teenage marriage has virtually disappeared except among particular ethnic groups.
- In the early 1970s half of all first marriages occurred for women by the time they were 21 and half of all first male marriages occurred by the time they were 23 years old. Now marriage in the early twenties is an unusual event.
- Marriage rates have declined in every single age group but particularly among men and women in their teenage years and in their twenties – especially the early twenties.
- The average age of first marriage for men is now 29 and 27.1 for women.
- Men continue to marry women who are about two years younger than they are on average. It is still relatively unusual for men to marry older women.
- Weddings are increasingly being performed by civil celebrants rather than by ministers of religion. Civil marriages are now the majority of all marriages and make up for three quarters of remarriages.
- On average, men will spend 28 years married and women will spend 29 years married.
- Based on trends in 1997-99 it is predicted that 71 per cent of men and 77 per cent of women will marry at some point in their life – down considerably from the predictions of 79 and 86 per cent made in 1985.
- In general men and women tend to marry people of similar age, ethnicity, religion and education as themselves.
- Among men the chances of being married or having a partner improve considerably when he has a good education, a good job and a good income. Men without these things are less likely to be married or partnered.
- Partnering rates of both men and women fell sharply in all age groups from 1986-2001.
- Remarriage rates are declining in a similar way to first marriage rates.
- Nevertheless, in each age group, people who have been married once are more likely to remarry than are people who have not yet married.
- A third of all marriages now consist of at least one person who has previously been married.