

Report:

2006-based marital status and cohabitation projections for England & Wales

Introduction

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published the 2006-based marital status projections for England and Wales on 31 March 2009¹. These cover both legal marital status and cohabitation² and are the first set of marital status projections to adjust for marriages to England and Wales residents taking place abroad³. The results of the projections are available to 2031 and replace the 2003-based projections published by the Government Actuaries Department (GAD)⁴; responsibility for the projections transferred to the ONS in 2006. The new marital status projections are fully consistent with the 2006-based national population projections (by age and sex) for England and Wales published in October 2007⁵. They also incorporate new estimates of the population by legal marital status⁶ and the population cohabiting⁷ as at the middle of 2007. For this reason, all data tables start at mid-2007.

One of the main uses of these projections is as an input to the regular projections of the number, and type, of households in England, produced by Communities and Local Government⁸. Marital status projections are also used by the Department for Work and Pensions to cost various aspects of the future social security programme.

Assumptions

The legal marital status projections are produced using a component methodology⁹ that uses assumptions of the underlying marriage, remarriage and divorce rates based on recent trends. The cohabitation projection uses assumptions about the proportions cohabiting and applies these to the results of the legal marital status projections. A group of experts were consulted on the assumptions used.

Marriage rates for the past five years were extrapolated forward, but trends were assumed to diminish gradually, with projected rates held constant from 2017¹⁰. The past five years was a shorter series than used in previous projections, as estimates for marriages taking place abroad are not available for years before 2002. Similarly divorce rates for the past ten years were extrapolated forward but with trends assumed to diminish gradually, with projected rates held constant from 2017¹¹.

For marriages, the assumptions made are that marriage rates for under 30-year-olds will continue to fall over the next ten years, as seen over the last decade, but at older ages rates will either remain similar to those presently observed or increase slightly. For divorces, it is assumed that rates will not change much for under those aged under 35, but that rates will continue to rise at ages over 40.

Establishing the underlying trend in opposite sex cohabitation is more difficult as there is not a consistent series of estimates of the cohabiting population of England and Wales. However, estimates of proportions cohabiting can be obtained from periodic estimates of the cohabiting population in England and Wales⁷. These show a continued increase in the proportion of the population cohabiting for people aged over 30 that have never been married, but there is no clear evidence of changing levels of cohabitation for other ages or marital states. Thus the proportion of people who cohabit is assumed to rise for single (never married) people aged over 30, but to remain constant for all other marital status and age groups¹².

As noted above, the marital status projections are consistent with the 2006-based national population projections for England and Wales. Therefore, the total number of deaths and the total number of net migrants each year are constrained to agree, for each age and sex, with the national projection. Assumptions about the distribution by marital status have to be made for these deaths and migrants. Mortality rates in England and Wales, as in other countries, are consistently lower for married people than for never married or previously married individuals. These mortality differentials have changed little in recent years, so it has been assumed that current mortality differentials by marital status remain constant throughout the projection period¹³. For net migration, an assumed marital status distribution has been derived from the distributions used by ONS in the preparation of its mid-year population estimates by marital status¹⁴.

Consistency constraints

The marital status projections are subject to a number of constraints¹⁵, both external (for example agreeing with the national population projections) and internal (such as an equal number of divorces to men

Box one

Consistency constraints of the projection model

Typically, a marital status projection will be subject to a number of external and internal constraints¹⁵. Within these constraints, the projections will be determined by assumptions of future marriage and remarriage rates, divorce rates, mortality differentials by marital status and net migration by marital status.

External constraints

The marital status projections were constrained to agree with the 2006-based national (age and sex) projections for England and Wales.

Internal constraints

The 'input rates' for marriage and divorce described in the main text were subject to further adjustment in order to satisfy the following standard two-sex consistency requirements:

- (a) the number of males divorcing must equal the number of females divorcing
- (b) the number of married males dying must equal the number of females becoming widowed, and
- (c) the number of married females dying must equal the number of males becoming widowed

Note, however, that as one partner in a marriage may be temporarily resident abroad, the number of married men and women are never exactly equal in population estimates and have not been constrained to be equal in these projections.

Cohabitation

As noted above, the estimated numbers of married men and women are never exactly equal, and have not been constrained to be equal in the legal marital status projections. A similar argument could apply to the cohabiting population, but the available data does not allow an accurate estimate to be made of any imbalance. Therefore, both the base year population estimates produced by ONS and these projections have been constrained so that the total number of cohabiting males equals the total number of cohabiting females.

and women). More detail of these constraints can be found in **Box One**. As a consequence of including an adjustment for marriages taking place abroad, two changes have been made to the consistency constraints compared to those used for the 2003-based projection. Firstly, it is no longer assumed that the number of married males and females entering the country are equal. Secondly, it is no longer assumed that there are an equal number of marriages of males and females each year.

Legal marital status results

Principal projection

The 2006-based population projections by legal marital status for England and Wales can be seen for 2007 and selected years to 2031 in **Table 1**.

The proportion of the adult¹⁶ population who are married is projected to fall from 51 per cent in 2007 to 42 per cent in 2031 for males, and from 48 per cent to 41 per cent for females. The actual number projected to be

married changes little due to the expected increase in the adult population over the period in question.

The falling marriage rates for those aged under 30 observed in the past, and expected to continue in the short term, have an impact over the course of the projection period. In addition to the immediate effect on the proportions of those under 30 being married it also has an impact at older ages. Thus over the period to 2031 there is expected to be a fall in the married population aged less than 65, and a corresponding increase in the never married population. The proportion of men aged between 45 and 54 who have never been married is projected to more than double between 2007 and 2031 rising from 16 per cent to 35 per cent, and for men aged between 55 and 64 from 9 per cent to 25 per cent. Similarly, for never married women at the same ages, proportions are projected to increase more than threefold.

The proportion of the adult population who are divorced is projected to increase slightly between 2007 and 2031, from 8 to 9 per cent for males and from 10 to 12 per cent for females. However, patterns for each age group are mixed; between 2007 and 2031 the proportion of divorced men aged between 35 and 44 is projected to decrease from 10 per cent to 7 per cent, and for women of the same ages from 14 to 10 per cent. This is partly due to the falling size in the married population at these ages, which therefore reduces the number of people who are at risk of divorce. At ages 45 to 64, the proportion of the population that are divorced will rise to a peak around 2021 and then start to fall. The most significant increase is in the oldest age group of 65 and over, where the number divorced is expected to more than double from 7 per cent in 2007 to 14 per cent in 2031 for males, and from 8 per cent to 17 per cent for females. At younger ages, the proportion of adults who are divorced is projected to fall gradually from 2007.

Results are affected by other demographic factors as well as trends in marriage and divorce. For example, as mortality continues to improve, particularly at older ages, the proportion of both sexes who are widowed reduces. The proportion of women aged 75 and over who are widowed is projected to fall from 61 per cent in 2007 to 40 per cent in 2031. The number of males who are widowed is lower, as might be expected due to higher female life expectancy, but the proportion aged 75 and over projected to be widowed also drops from 26 per cent in 2007 to 19 per cent in 2031.

The projected change in the composition of the population by legal marital status is clearly shown in the pyramids for 2007 and 2031 in **Figure 1** (an animated series of population pyramids is available from the ONS website¹⁷). Comparing these pyramids shows how both the size and average age of the population as a whole is projected to increase. It also shows that the number remaining never married is projected to stay high at younger ages, and to increase considerably at older ages, with a corresponding reduction in the proportion married. The increase in the proportion divorced at older ages can also be clearly seen.

Variant projections

Population projections are, of course, subject to uncertainty. Inevitably, actual trends in marriage and divorce will differ, to a greater or lesser extent, from those assumed in the principal projections. To give an indication of the underlying uncertainty, variant projections have been produced based on alternative assumptions about the future levels of marriage and divorce. In these variants, marriage and divorce rates are applied which gradually diverge from those assumed in the principal projection until, from 2021 onwards, assumed first marriage and divorce rates differ by +/- 15 per cent from the principal projection and assumed remarriage rates differ by +/- 10 per cent.

Summary results of all the variant projections by legal marital status are shown in **Table 2**. In terms of numbers of people, the high marriage

Table 1

Estimated and projected population by legal marital status, age and sex, 1991–2031

England and Wales

2006-based marital status projections

		Number (thousands)					Percentages				
		Total	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Total	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced
Males											
All 16 plus	1991	19,441	5,891	11,636	727	1,187	100	30	60	4	6
	2001	20,198	6,894	11,090	733	1,482	100	34	55	4	7
	2007	21,338	8,049	10,851	715	1,724	100	38	51	3	8
	2011	22,174	8,811	10,799	717	1,848	100	40	49	3	8
	2021	23,894	10,196	10,765	755	2,179	100	43	45	3	9
	2031	25,745	11,682	10,882	817	2,364	100	45	42	3	9
	16–24	1991	3,336	3,074	250	0	12	100	92	8	0
2001		2,891	2,806	80	1	4	100	97	3	0	0
2007		3,357	3,287	66	1	3	100	98	2	0	0
2011		3,415	3,361	52	0	2	100	98	2	0	0
2021		3,111	3,071	39	0	1	100	99	1	0	0
2031		3,520	3,477	42	0	1	100	99	1	0	0
25–34		1991	3,920	1,652	2,028	2	237	100	42	52	0
	2001	3,758	2,227	1,391	3	136	100	59	37	0	4
	2007	3,509	2,384	1,027	3	96	100	68	29	0	3
	2011	3,779	2,741	955	3	81	100	73	25	0	2
	2021	4,300	3,304	924	1	71	100	77	21	0	2
	2031	4,004	3,095	846	1	63	100	77	21	0	2
	35–44	1991	3,504	477	2,632	11	384	100	14	75	0
2001		3,881	963	2,494	12	411	100	25	64	0	11
2007		4,076	1,259	2,385	10	422	100	31	59	0	10
2011		3,853	1,342	2,135	9	367	100	35	55	0	10
2021		3,870	1,737	1,830	6	297	100	45	47	0	8
2031		4,388	2,110	1,969	5	305	100	48	45	0	7
45–54		1991	2,919	251	2,347	31	290	100	9	80	1
	2001	3,415	419	2,511	37	448	100	12	74	1	13
	2007	3,475	563	2,365	30	519	100	16	68	1	15
	2011	3,801	734	2,459	28	581	100	19	65	1	15
	2021	3,771	1,033	2,150	20	568	100	27	57	1	15
	2031	3,798	1,339	1,953	15	491	100	35	51	0	13
	55–64	1991	2,514	205	2,047	96	165	100	8	81	4
2001		2,744	225	2,136	84	299	100	8	78	3	11
2007		3,146	294	2,351	85	417	100	9	75	3	13
2011		3,176	344	2,286	79	467	100	11	72	2	15
2021		3,582	615	2,282	62	623	100	17	64	2	17
2031		3,565	879	2,048	48	590	100	25	57	1	17
65–74		1991	2,027	150	1,574	229	74	100	7	78	11
	2001	2,052	155	1,569	188	139	100	8	76	9	7
	2007	2,127	150	1,620	162	196	100	7	76	8	9
	2011	2,342	168	1,762	160	252	100	7	75	7	11
	2021	2,792	273	1,963	154	402	100	10	70	6	14
	2031	3,202	507	2,036	130	530	100	16	64	4	17
	75 plus	1991	1,221	81	759	357	25	100	7	62	29
2001		1,458	99	909	407	44	100	7	62	28	3
2007		1,649	114	1,038	425	72	100	7	63	26	4
2011		1,809	121	1,150	438	99	100	7	64	24	5
2021		2,470	164	1,577	511	217	100	7	64	21	9
2031		3,268	276	1,989	618	385	100	8	61	19	12

Source: Office for National Statistics

Table 1
continued

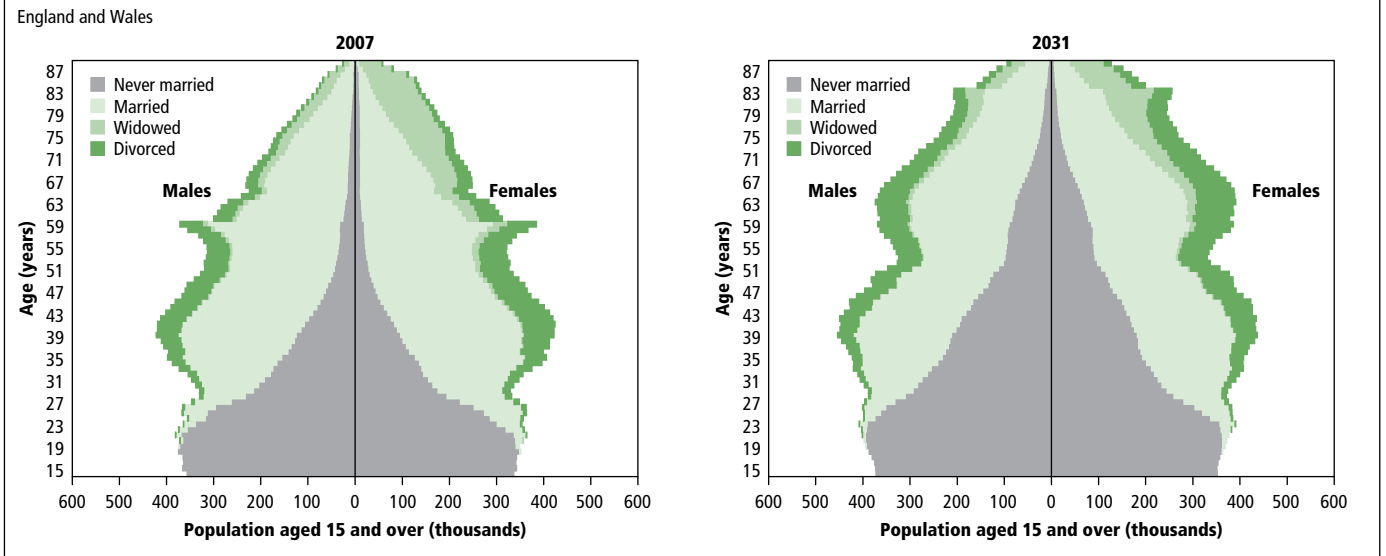
Estimated and projected population by legal marital status, age and sex, 1991–2031

England and Wales

2006-based marital status projections

		Number (thousands)					Percentages				
		Total	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Total	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced
Females											
All 16 plus	1991	21,060	4,817	11,833	2,951	1,459	100	23	56	14	7
	2001	21,667	5,798	11,150	2,745	1,975	100	27	51	13	9
	2007	22,521	6,871	10,851	2,511	2,289	100	31	48	11	10
	2011	23,201	7,604	10,775	2,365	2,457	100	33	46	10	11
	2021	24,660	8,892	10,733	2,149	2,886	100	36	44	9	12
	2031	26,440	10,402	10,745	2,140	3,154	100	39	41	8	12
16–24	1991	3,240	2,688	522	1	30	100	83	16	0	1
	2001	2,833	2,627	194	2	9	100	93	7	0	0
	2007	3,166	3,016	142	1	6	100	95	4	0	0
	2011	3,206	3,089	112	0	4	100	96	3	0	0
	2021	2,919	2,830	85	0	3	100	97	3	0	0
	2031	3,323	3,228	91	0	4	100	97	3	0	0
25–34	1991	3,943	1,135	2,488	8	312	100	29	63	0	8
	2001	3,778	1,770	1,768	10	231	100	47	47	0	6
	2007	3,490	2,000	1,326	7	158	100	57	38	0	5
	2011	3,745	2,338	1,262	6	139	100	62	34	0	4
	2021	4,127	2,801	1,200	3	123	100	68	29	0	3
	2031	3,847	2,637	1,098	3	110	100	69	29	0	3
35–44	1991	3,517	280	2,760	34	444	100	8	78	1	13
	2001	3,935	692	2,649	36	558	100	18	67	1	14
	2007	4,132	1,004	2,525	29	574	100	24	61	1	14
	2011	3,882	1,120	2,242	23	497	100	29	58	1	13
	2021	3,861	1,493	1,945	15	407	100	39	50	0	11
	2031	4,241	1,808	2,015	12	406	100	43	48	0	10
45–54	1991	2,915	144	2,322	118	332	100	5	80	4	11
	2001	3,471	256	2,548	111	557	100	7	73	3	16
	2007	3,551	397	2,413	87	654	100	11	68	2	18
	2011	3,884	566	2,501	79	738	100	15	64	2	19
	2021	3,835	926	2,148	52	710	100	24	56	1	19
	2031	3,821	1,234	1,936	36	615	100	32	51	1	16
55–64	1991	2,613	149	1,889	385	189	100	6	72	15	7
	2001	2,817	135	2,031	291	361	100	5	72	10	13
	2007	3,267	179	2,306	260	522	100	5	71	8	16
	2011	3,307	224	2,266	231	586	100	7	69	7	18
	2021	3,731	501	2,288	166	776	100	13	61	4	21
	2031	3,692	826	2,015	120	731	100	22	55	3	20
65–74	1991	2,479	176	1,317	879	107	100	7	53	35	4
	2001	2,326	130	1,322	697	177	100	6	57	30	8
	2007	2,342	111	1,410	563	257	100	5	60	24	11
	2011	2,549	115	1,580	519	335	100	5	62	20	13
	2021	3,039	195	1,862	444	538	100	6	61	15	18
	2031	3,471	445	1,963	354	709	100	13	57	10	20
75 plus	1991	2,353	246	536	1,526	46	100	10	23	65	2
	2001	2,506	188	639	1,598	81	100	7	25	64	3
	2007	2,573	163	728	1,564	118	100	6	28	61	5
	2011	2,628	151	812	1,507	158	100	6	31	57	6
	2021	3,149	146	1,204	1,470	330	100	5	38	47	10
	2031	4,045	225	1,627	1,616	578	100	6	40	40	14

Figure 1 Population by age, sex and legal marital status, 2007 and 2031



Source: Office for National Statistics

Table 2 Comparison of marriage and divorce variants, 2007 to 2031

England and Wales
2006-based marital status projections

	Population aged 16 and over				
	Total	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced
Estimate					
2007	43,860	14,920	21,702	3,226	4,012
Principal					
2011	45,375	16,415	21,574	3,082	4,305
2021	48,554	19,087	21,498	2,904	5,065
2031	52,185	22,084	21,627	2,957	5,517
High marriage					
2011	45,375	16,377	21,619	3,081	4,298
2021	48,554	18,700	21,925	2,901	5,028
2031	52,185	21,220	22,512	2,960	5,493
Low marriage					
2011	45,375	16,453	21,528	3,082	4,312
2021	48,554	19,489	21,056	2,907	5,101
2031	52,185	23,016	20,681	2,955	5,533
High divorce					
2011	45,375	16,415	21,550	3,082	4,329
2021	48,554	19,088	21,291	2,901	5,274
2031	52,185	22,086	21,230	2,945	5,923
Low divorce					
2011	45,375	16,415	21,598	3,082	4,281
2021	48,554	19,087	21,708	2,907	4,852
2031	52,185	22,082	22,036	2,970	5,098

Source: Office for National Statistics

and low divorce variants both show very slight increases in the expected numbers of married people by 2031 compared to 2007. But even the high marriage variant shows that over time the proportion of the adult population that are expected to be married will fall from 49 per cent in 2007 to 43 per cent in 2031, compared to 41 per cent for the principal projection and 40 per cent for the low marriage variant. In all projections the size of the never married population increases significantly.

The size of the divorced population is projected to increase over the period of the projection for all the variants, including the low divorce variant. In 2007 the divorced adult population was estimated to be 4.0 million; the low divorce variant projects this to increase to 5.1 million by 2031, compared to 5.5 million for the principal projection and 5.9 million for the high divorce variant. This is mainly an effect of the ageing of those currently aged 35 to 54 who have been exposed to recent high divorce rates.

There are a number of complex interactions at work within these variants. A higher number of people getting married will, of course, reduce the number of people who remain never married. However, the knock-on effects on the divorced and widowed populations are less straightforward. A higher marriage rate assumption increases the number of married people and therefore increases the number at risk of divorce or widowhood. However, this is offset by an increase in the proportion assumed to remarry.

Cohabitation results

Projections by legal marital status alone are insufficient to give a full picture of the partnership status of the population of England and Wales due to the increasing occurrence of cohabitation, either as a prelude to marriage or as an alternative. ONS therefore has also produced 2006-based cohabitation projections by legal marital status.

Principal projection

The results of the principal cohabitation projection can be seen in **Table 3**. The total number of cohabiting couples is projected to rise considerably, from 2.25 million in 2007 to 3.7 million in 2031. The proportion of the cohabiting population at older ages is expected to become much larger. The number cohabiting at ages 45 to 64 is projected to more than double from nearly 0.5 million in 2007 to more than 1.1 million in 2031 for males, and from nearly 0.4 million to over 1.0 million for females. Large increases are also projected for the over 65 age group, but starting from very low figures in 2007. People currently in this age group would, in the past, have almost always formalised a relationship with marriage.

Thus, whereas in 2007 25 per cent of male and 19 per cent of female cohabitants were aged over 45, by 2031 these proportions are projected to rise to 40 per cent for males and 34 per cent for females.

Table 3

Population cohabiting by legal marital status, age and sex, 2007 to 2031

England and Wales

2006-based marital status projections

thousands

		Males cohabiting					Females cohabiting				
		Total	Never married	Married – separated	Widowed	Divorced	Total	Never married	Married – separated	Widowed	Divorced
16 plus	2007	2,250	1,620	68	32	531	2,250	1,672	45	53	480
	2011	2,558	1,914	65	30	549	2,558	1,981	42	47	488
	2021	3,219	2,542	59	27	590	3,219	2,633	38	36	511
	2031	3,700	3,026	58	24	592	3,700	3,142	37	29	492
16–24	2007	249	247	0	0	2	441	438	1	0	2
	2011	273	271	0	0	1	477	475	1	0	1
	2021	247	246	0	0	1	441	440	1	0	1
	2031	273	272	0	0	1	492	491	1	0	1
25–34	2007	843	800	8	1	34	853	800	8	1	44
	2011	950	913	8	1	28	977	930	8	1	38
	2021	1,136	1,104	7	0	25	1,183	1,141	8	0	35
	2031	1,062	1,033	7	0	22	1,109	1,071	7	0	31
35–44	2007	605	415	25	2	162	518	331	17	5	166
	2011	640	475	23	2	140	556	395	15	4	143
	2021	760	627	19	1	112	710	575	13	3	119
	2031	902	765	21	1	115	846	713	14	2	118
45–54	2007	310	117	19	3	171	252	78	12	10	152
	2011	405	190	20	3	192	334	141	13	9	171
	2021	563	360	17	2	185	498	317	11	6	165
	2031	661	483	15	2	161	609	451	10	4	144
55–64	2007	168	32	10	8	118	132	19	5	16	92
	2011	197	49	10	8	130	151	31	5	14	102
	2021	347	158	10	6	173	279	126	5	10	138
	2031	482	307	9	5	161	413	277	4	7	125
65 plus	2007	76	9	5	17	45	55	6	1	22	25
	2011	95	15	5	17	58	65	10	1	21	33
	2021	166	48	6	17	95	108	35	1	18	54
	2031	320	165	6	16	133	230	139	1	15	74

Source: Office for National Statistics

Figure 2

Population cohabiting by age, sex and legal marital status, 2007 and 2031

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Table 4

Comparison of cohabitation variants, 2007 to 2031

England and Wales

2006-based marital status projections

thousands

	Couples		Persons		
	All cohabiting	Never married	Separated	Widowed	Divorced
Principal projection					
2007	2,250	3,291	113	85	1,011
2011	2,558	3,895	107	77	1,037
2021	3,219	5,175	97	63	1,101
2031	3,700	6,168	95	53	1,084
High cohabitation variant					
2007	2,306	3,374	115	87	1,036
2011	2,725	4,174	112	81	1,084
2021	3,766	6,151	107	70	1,206
2031	4,378	7,402	104	57	1,193
Low cohabitation variant					
2007	2,194	3,210	109	82	986
2011	2,391	3,615	102	74	990
2021	2,672	4,201	89	57	996
2031	3,022	4,935	85	47	976

Note: Figures may not add exactly to totals due to rounding.

Source: Office for National Statistics

The projected cohabitation trends are shown by the pyramids for 2007 and 2031 in **Figure 2**, which clearly illustrate both the increasing size and the ageing of the cohabiting population (an animated series of population pyramids illustrating the results of the cohabitation projection is available from the ONS website¹⁸).

Variant projections

As with legal marital status, high and low cohabitation variant projections have also been produced to illustrate the sensitivity of the results to alternative levels of future cohabitation. These variants also allow for some uncertainty in the base estimates of cohabitation by

varying the initial proportions cohabiting in each age/sex/marital status group by +/- 2.5 per cent. These revised initial proportions are then assumed to diverge further from the assumed proportions cohabiting in the principal projection, so that from 2022 onwards they differ by +/- 20 per cent for the never married group and +/- 10 per cent for the previously married groups. The difference reflects the greater stability of recent trends in proportions cohabiting for previously married groups.

Results of these variant projections can be seen in **Table 4**. The difference between these variants is considerable, reflecting uncertainty about future cohabitation rates. While there would be 3.7 million cohabiting couples in 2031 under the principal projection assumptions, the number would be as high as 4.4 million for the high cohabitation variant and only 3.0 million for the low cohabitation variant. However, even this low variant represents a 34 per cent increase over the number of cohabiting couples in 2007.

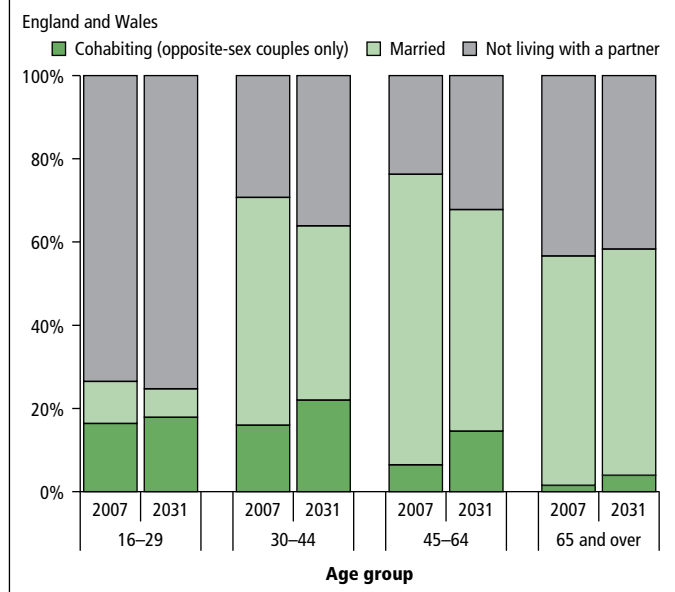
Population by partnership status

For many users, such as those interested in the demand for housing, it is the combination of the legal marital status projections and the cohabitation projections that is of interest. This is illustrated by **Table 5**, which looks at future trends in total partnership. This table shows the effect of a smaller proportion of the population becoming married combined with the greater proportion cohabiting, with both trends gradually spreading to older ages.

The proportion of adults who are in co-residential opposite-sex couples is projected to fall, while the proportion of people not living with a partner

Figure 3

Estimated and projected proportion of population by partnership status and age, 2007 and 2031



Source: Office for National Statistics

Key findings

- The proportion of the married adult population is projected to fall from 51 per cent in 2007 to 42 per cent in 2031 for males, and from 48 per cent to 41 per cent for females, with corresponding increases in the proportion that never marry
- Recent falls in marriage rates at ages under 30 will, in time, have an impact at older ages. It is projected that there will be marked falls in the married population and increases in the never married population at ages 30 to 64 in the period to 2031
- The proportion of adults who are divorced is expected to continue rising at ages over 65. At ages 45 to 64 the proportion that is divorced will rise to a peak around 2021 and is then expected to start to fall. At younger ages, the proportion of divorced adults is projected to fall gradually from 2007
- The proportion of females aged 75 and over who are widowed is projected to fall from 61 per cent in 2007 to 40 per cent in 2031, and from 26 per cent to 19 per cent for males. This is largely due to projected improvements in life expectancy
- The number of cohabiting couples, estimated to be 2.25 million in 2007, is projected to increase by almost two-thirds to 3.7 million by 2031. The proportion of the cohabiting population at older ages is expected to get much larger; in 2007 only 25 per cent of male cohabitants and 19 per cent of female cohabitants were aged over 45, but by 2031 these proportions are projected to rise to 40 per cent for males and 34 per cent for females
- The proportion of adults who are in co-residential opposite-sex couples is projected to fall at most ages, while the proportion of people not living with a partner correspondingly rises. In contrast, the proportion of adults aged over 65 who are married or cohabiting is projected to rise slightly, largely due to projected improvements in life expectancy

Table 5

Projected population by partnership status, age and sex

England and Wales

2006-based marital status projections

		Population (thousands)					Percentages				
		Total	Married ¹	Cohabiting ¹	Unpartnered ² never married	Unpartnered ² widowed or divorced	Total	Married ¹	Cohabiting ¹	Unpartnered ² never married	Unpartnered ² widowed or divorced
Males											
16 plus	2007	21,338	10,783	2,250	6,430	1,875	100	51	11	30	9
	2011	22,174	10,734	2,558	6,897	1,986	100	48	12	31	9
	2021	23,894	10,706	3,219	7,653	2,316	100	45	13	32	10
	2031	25,745	10,824	3,700	8,657	2,565	100	42	14	34	10
16–29	2007	5,127	390	704	4,015	19	100	8	14	78	0
	2011	5,408	356	800	4,237	15	100	7	15	78	0
	2021	5,188	295	814	4,069	11	100	6	16	78	0
	2031	5,502	282	814	4,397	10	100	5	15	80	0
30–44	2007	5,815	3,054	992	1,452	316	100	53	17	25	5
	2011	5,639	2,755	1,062	1,548	274	100	49	19	27	5
	2021	6,093	2,472	1,329	2,065	227	100	41	22	34	4
	2031	6,411	2,547	1,424	2,215	226	100	40	22	35	4
45–64	2007	6,621	4,686	478	709	748	100	71	7	11	11
	2011	6,977	4,715	601	838	822	100	68	9	12	12
	2021	7,352	4,405	910	1,130	907	100	60	12	15	12
	2031	7,362	3,976	1,143	1,427	816	100	54	16	19	11
65 plus	2007	3,775	2,653	76	254	793	100	70	2	7	21
	2011	4,151	2,907	95	274	874	100	70	2	7	21
	2021	5,261	3,534	166	389	1,172	100	67	3	7	22
	2031	6,470	4,019	320	618	1,514	100	62	5	10	23
Females											
16 plus	2007	22,521	10,806	2,250	5,198	4,267	100	48	10	23	19
	2011	23,201	10,733	2,558	5,623	4,287	100	46	11	24	19
	2021	24,660	10,694	3,219	6,258	4,488	100	43	13	25	18
	2031	26,440	10,708	3,700	7,259	4,773	100	40	14	27	18
16–29	2007	4,922	624	941	3,315	41	100	13	19	67	1
	2011	5,156	573	1,060	3,488	35	100	11	21	68	1
	2021	4,904	471	1,080	3,328	25	100	10	22	68	1
	2031	5,219	454	1,101	3,641	24	100	9	21	70	0
30–44	2007	5,867	3,343	871	1,136	517	100	57	15	19	9
	2011	5,677	3,019	950	1,260	449	100	53	17	22	8
	2021	6,002	2,738	1,254	1,641	369	100	46	21	27	6
	2031	6,192	2,729	1,347	1,757	358	100	44	22	28	6
45–64	2007	6,818	4,702	384	479	1,253	100	69	6	7	18
	2011	7,191	4,750	485	618	1,339	100	66	7	9	19
	2021	7,566	4,421	777	983	1,384	100	58	10	13	18
	2031	7,513	3,937	1,022	1,331	1,223	100	52	14	18	16
65 plus	2007	4,915	2,137	55	268	2,455	100	43	1	5	50
	2011	5,177	2,391	65	256	2,465	100	46	1	5	48
	2021	6,188	3,065	108	307	2,709	100	50	2	5	44
	2031	7,516	3,588	230	531	3,168	100	48	3	7	42

Notes:

1. People who are separated and cohabiting are included in the cohabiting category, and excluded from the married category, in this table. The married category will include people who are separated but not cohabiting; projections are not available for this group.
2. Not living with an opposite-sex partner.

Source: Office for National Statistics

correspondingly rises at most ages, as illustrated in **Figure 3**. Only for women aged over 65 is the proportion of the population who are either legally married or cohabiting projected to increase, from 45 per cent in 2007 to 51 per cent in 2031, largely due to projected improvements in life expectancy.

Notes, references and links to downloadable information on this topic

- 1 To access full results of the 2006-based marital status projections see: www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=14491
- 2 Cohabitation estimates and projections are produced for opposite-sex co-residential cohabiting adults only.
- 3 A variant for marriages abroad was produced for the 2003-based set of marital status projections.
- 4 To access results of the 2003-based marital status projections see: www.gad.gov.uk/Demography%20Data/Marital%20status%20projections/
- 5 For information about the 2006-based national population projections see: www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=8519
- 6 For the latest marital status estimates for England and Wales see: www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15107
- 7 Wilson B (2009), Estimating the cohabiting population, *Population Trends* 136.
- 8 For information on household projections produced by Communities and Local Government see: www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/householdestimates/
- 9 For methodology documentation see: www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Marr-proj06/method.pdf
- 10 For further information on the marriage assumptions see: www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Marr-proj06/marriage.pdf
- 11 For further information on the divorce assumptions see: www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Marr-proj06/divorce.pdf
- 12 For further information on the cohabitation assumptions see: www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Marr-proj06/cohabitation.pdf
- 13 For further information about mortality see: www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Marr-proj06/mortality.pdf
- 14 For further information about migration see: www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Marr-proj06/migration.pdf
- 15 For details of how constraints are handled within the model see: www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Marr-proj06/consistency.pdf
- 16 An adult is defined as a person aged 16 years or older
- 17 Animated population pyramids, by legal marital status, 2007–2031 see: www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Marr-proj06/legalpyramid.pps
- 18 Animated population pyramids of the cohabiting population, 2007–2031 see: www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Marr-proj06/cohabpyramid.pps