



FAMILY FORMATION AND DISSOLUTION 1982

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FAMILY FORMATION AND DISSOLUTION 1982

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PREFACE

This report examines patterns of family formation and dissolution in the context of previous trends and possible developments in the future.

The data presented are drawn from a diversity of ABS sources including the 1982 Families Survey and several of the Population Censuses conducted between 1881 and 1981. The report is in the following sections:

Marriage trends in Australian history

De facto relationships

Marital dissolution

Remarriage

Marriage and marital dissolution: the experience of the older generation.

The format of the report is similar to that used to disseminate a range of other social statistics, including data on handicapped persons, Australian families and the aged population. The analysis is based on data from various ABS sources and is presented for the most part as text with supporting charts and a limited number of tables.

Further data on marriage and families may be found in the related publication *Australian Families, 1982* (4408.0).

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1985

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

Introduction

This report examines patterns of family formation and dissolution: when people marry, separate, divorce or become widowed, and when they remarry, and who are more likely to experience these events in their lives. Events are considered in an historical context including previous trends and possible implications for the future of any identified changes in those trends. The report draws on a number of ABS data sources, principally the 1982 Families Survey and population censuses. Some of the concepts and terms used are defined on page 1. Details of data sources are also given on page 1.

Definitions

Below are some definitions that may be useful in interpreting the data presented in this report. However, these are not the only terms and concepts that may require explanation. For further details refer to the publications listed in the Data sources and references section.

Marital status and marital history: the marital status and marital history of persons are defined in terms of registered marriages and legally dissolved marriages. However, it should be noted that the 1982 Families Survey also collected specific information on de facto relationships. For more detailed definitions see *Australian Families, 1982* (4408.0), *Marriages, Australia, 1981, 1982* (3306.0) and *Divorces, Australia, 1971, 1981, 1982* (3307.0).

Crude marriage rate: number of marriages per 1,000 mean population.

First marriage ratio: number of males or females of a certain age marrying for the first time per 1,000 mid-year population of males or females of the same age irrespective of marital status.

Crude divorce rate: number of divorces per 1,000 of the mean population. In the interpretation of this rate it must be kept in mind that a large and varying proportion of the population used in the denominator is unmarried or below the minimum age of marriage.

Age-specific dissolution rate: relates the number of dissolutions per 1,000 population by age when decrees were made absolute, to the population in specific age groups. Males under 18 years and females under 16 years are excluded from the population.

Median age: that age which divides the population into two halves, one half being below the median age and one half above.

Offspring/children: used interchangeably in this publication and refer to all children of the marriage whether currently present or not.

Symbols and other usages

- nil or rounded to zero
- * subject to sampling variability too high for most practical purposes.

Data sources and references

Australian Families, 1982 (4408.0) (\$1.50, \$2.20 incl. postage)

Demography Bulletin No. 82, 1964 (Ref. No. 4.9)

Divorces, Australia, 1971, 1981, 1982 (3307.0)

Families Survey, 1982 — unpublished data

Marriages, Australia, 1981, 1982 (3306.0)

Population Censuses, 1881, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1933, 1947, 1954, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1981

Social Indicators, Australia, No. 4, 1984 (4101.0) (\$21.50, \$25.50 incl. postage)

Bernard, J. 1976. *The Future of Marriage* quoted in B. English and R. King, 'Families in Australia'. Family Research Unit UNSW, 1983

McDonald, P.F. 1974. *Marriage in Australia: Age at First Marriage and Proportions Marrying*. Department of Demography, Australian National University, Australian Family Formation Project Monograph No. 2.

SECTION 1—MARRIAGE TRENDS IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Some Australian marriage characteristics tend to remain fairly constant. One such is that men tend to marry women who are younger than themselves, especially when it is the first marriage for both partners. The 1982 Families Survey confirmed this pattern and showed that the husband was older than the wife in 76 per cent of married couples in which both partners had been married only once. Spouses were of the same age in 11 per cent of couples, and the wife was older in 13 per cent of couples. The pattern is less strong among couples in which one or both partners had been previously married. Women were the older partner in 25 per cent of such married couples.

However there are other marriage characteristics which change over the years. Among these are crude marriage rates for the population, the proportion of the population which experiences marriage and ages at first marriage.

In 1982 there were 117,275 marriages registered in Australia¹. This was a 3 per cent increase over 1981 compared with a 4.3 per cent increase between 1980 and 1981. The crude marriage rate (marriages per 1,000 mean population) rose from 7.6 in 1981 to 7.7 in 1982. In recent years, this rate had been as low as 7.2 in 1978 and 1979, contrasting sharply with a rate of 8.8 only ten years earlier (Table 1).

TABLE 1. MARRIAGES REGISTERED AND CRUDE MARRIAGE RATES, AUSTRALIA, 1951-1982

<i>Period</i>	<i>Registered marriages</i>	<i>Crude marriage rate(a)</i>
AVERAGE ANNUAL RATES		
1951-55	73,102	8.3
1956-60	73,854	7.5
1961-65	83,250	7.6
1966-70	106,188	8.8
1971-75	111,803	8.3
ANNUAL RATES		
1976	109,973	7.8
1977	104,918	7.4
1978	102,958	7.2
1979	104,396	7.2
1980	109,240	7.4
1981	113,905	7.6
1982	117,275	7.7

(a) Marriages per 1,000 mean population.

Source: *Marriages, Australia, 1982* (3306.0).

The 1982 crude marriage rate, although lower than rates in the 1950's and 1960's, nevertheless indicated some recovery from rates in the late 1970's. This upward movement occurred both in the number of first marriages and of remarriages².

Although the marriage rate is slowly increasing, this does not necessarily mean that a larger proportion of the population is marrying for the first time, but may instead be a reflection of a high rate of remarriage. To know how many people in Australia experience marriage at some time in their lives, it is necessary to examine marital status and marital history data.

The Families Survey indicated that in 1982, 73 per cent of males over 15 years of age had been married at some time in their lives, with 65 per cent claiming to be currently married. For females over 15 years of age, these figures were 80 per cent and 62 per cent respectively.

These proportions of ever married are relatively high compared with the pre-war period, when less than 60 per cent of males and less than 70 per cent of females were ever married (Table 2). Indeed at some times in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a significant proportion of men and women remained unmarried throughout their lives.

For example, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, over 20 per cent of men aged 45-59 years had never married; only 5 per cent of women in the same age group had never married (Table 3).

1. *Marriages, Australia, 1982* (3306.0)

2. *Ibid*

TABLE 2. PERSONS 15 YEARS AND OVER : SEX AND MARITAL STATUS,
AUSTRALIA, 1921-1982

Year	Marital status				Total persons	
	Ever married		Never married		Males	Females
	Males	Females	Males	Females		
	Per cent				Number	
1921	57	64	43	36	1,887,772	1,822,958
1933	57	66	42	35	2,440,187	2,368,085
1947	67	73	33	26	2,829,611	2,850,694
1954	70	78	30	22	3,326,458	3,186,738
1961	70	78	30	21	3,686,057	3,645,131
1966	70	77	31	22	4,078,621	4,079,353
1971	71	79	29	21	4,532,154	4,553,432
1976	71	79	29	21	4,884,468	4,973,647
1982	73	80	29	21	5,267,729	5,377,750

Source: Population Censuses, 1921, 1933, 1947, 1954, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1976; Families Survey, 1982.

This difference in the proportions never married between men and women was due partly to a larger number of men than women in the middle of the last century and partly to colonial conditions that tended to discourage marriage, such as 'insecurity of employment, the rarity of family settlement upon the land and the relative concentration of males in remote pastoral areas'.

TABLE 3. PERSONS AGED 45-59 YEARS WHO WERE NEVER MARRIED,
1881-1981
(Per cent)

Year	Males	Females
1881	24	5
1901	22	9
1921	19	15
1947	13	13
1961	10	9
1971	9	6
1981	8	4

Source: Population Censuses, 1881 to 1981.

As the sex composition of the population became more balanced, the proportions of females never marrying increased, so that during the 1920's and 1930's over 10 per cent of women aged 45-59 years had never married. However, as Table 2 indicates, the post-war period witnessed a marked increase in the proportions of people who have ever married and the proportion never married has declined considerably for both women and men. By 1981, only 4 per cent of women aged 45-59 years and 8 per cent of men in the same age group had never married (Table 3).

Since the war the relatively high proportion of people marrying has remained fairly constant. There are, however, different marriage patterns evident among those under 30 years. Since 1971, and especially since 1976, there has been a sharp decline in the proportions married for this age group. For example, only 45 per cent of women aged 20-24 years in 1981 had been married, compared with 60 per cent of women in the same age group in 1976 and 64 per cent in 1971. Among men in the same age group, 23 per cent had been married in 1981 compared with 33 per cent in 1976 and 36 per cent in 1971. The decline is not as severe among those aged 25-29 years, although it is still apparent: 81 per cent of women in this age group had been married in 1981 compared with 87 per cent in 1976 and 88 per cent in 1971, while among men aged 25-29 years, 65 per cent had been married in 1981 compared with 74 per cent in both 1976 and 1971.

The decline in proportions married among those under 30 years reflects the trend toward an increasing age at first marriage. The median age at first marriage for the whole population has increased by more than one year for both men and women since the early 1970's. In 1982, it was 24.6 years for men and 22.4 years for women. The annual averages for 1971-75 were 23.3 years for males and 21.0 years for females. The move towards deferral is reflected in first marriage ratios for males aged 24 years and over which have been rising since 1977 whereas ratios for males under 23 years have declined. First marriage ratios for females in the teenage years have continued to fall, while marriage ratios for females aged 22 years and over have been rising, particularly in the age range 22-26 years, but also for older female age groups (Fig. 1).

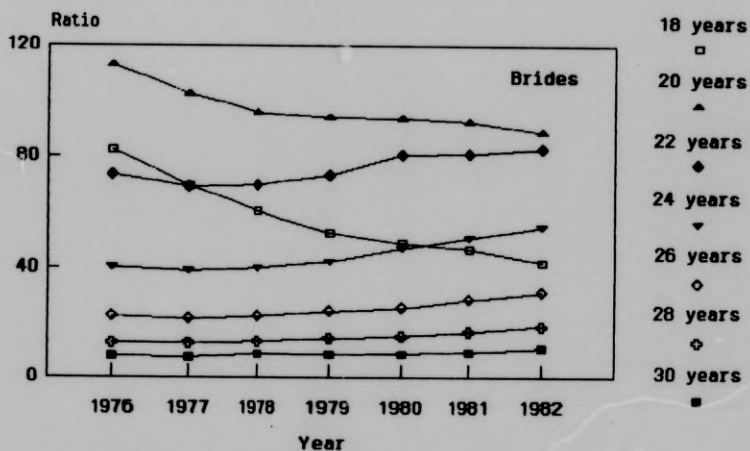
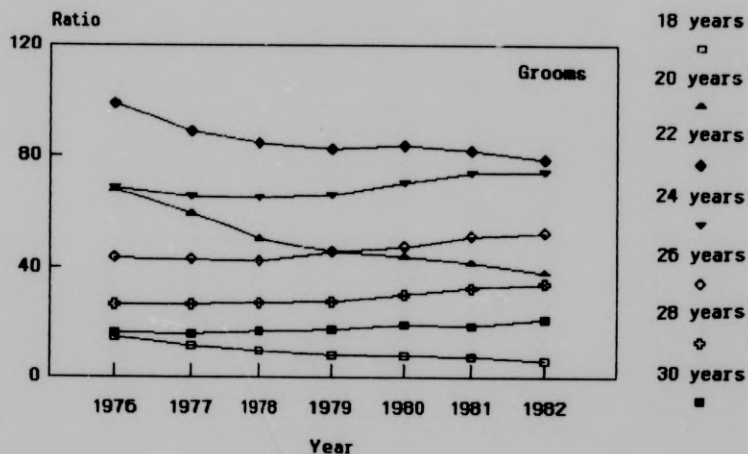
3. P.F. McDonald, 1974, p.247

4. Population Censuses, 1971, 1976, 1981

5. Marriages, Australia, 1982 (3306.0)

Who are the people who tend to delay marrying and how do they differ from those who marry at relatively younger ages? The Families Survey showed that men and women who had more years of schooling tended to marry later. For example, among males born in 1950-54, 65 per cent of those who left school before the age of 17 years were married by age 25 years compared with 48 per cent of those who left school at age 17 years or older. A similar pattern is observed among women born in the same years: 83 per cent of those who left school before age 17 years were married by age 25 years compared with 68 per cent of those who left at age 17 years or older. Birthplace is also a factor affecting age at marriage for women but not for men. Ninety per cent of women born in 1950-54 in Southern European countries were married by age 25 years compared with 78 per cent of Australian-born women of the same age, but there was not much difference in this respect between men born in Southern Europe and those born in Australia.

FIGURE 1: FIRST MARRIAGE RATIOS (a) 1976-1982.



(a) Per 1000 mid-year population at each age and sex.

Source: ABS Marriages, Australia, 1981, 1982.

SECTION 2—DE FACTO RELATIONSHIPS

One hypothesis regarding the recent rise in age at first marriage and the reduction in the proportions ever married in the age groups below 30 years is that an increasing proportion of young people are living together in de facto relationships.

Prior to the 1982 Families Survey there were no reliable statistics available on the incidence of de facto relationships; only a tentative estimate of the minimum number of such relationships was possible from the population censuses. In 1971 there were approximately 17,000 families containing spouses where the head was recorded as either not currently married (i.e. never married, widowed or divorced) or permanently separated. In 1976 this figure had increased to approximately 66,000 families, and in 1981 to 72,000 families.

The 1982 Families Survey, which collected specific information on de facto relationships, estimated that approximately 169,000 families containing spouses had heads whose marital status was de facto.

It appears that the incidence of such relationships has increased in the last ten years and that the persons concerned were relatively young. The Families Survey estimated that of the approximately 339,000 persons in de facto relationships in 1982, 58 per cent were under the age of 30 years. Among never married persons aged 15-49 years, 8 per cent of men and 11 per cent of women were living in a de facto relationship. The proportions of never married persons in such a relationship were highest for those aged 20-34 years with about 15 per cent of never married men aged 25-34 years and 15 per cent of never married women aged 20-34 years being in de facto relationships.

As well as being predominantly younger, persons who had entered de facto relationships had a number of other demographic and socio-economic characteristics. For example, persons born in Australia and the main English-speaking countries were more likely to be living together in such relationships compared with those born elsewhere (Table 4). Among younger men and women (for example, those under age 35 years), a higher proportion of the lower income group were in de facto relationships. However, among those aged 35 years and over, a larger proportion of the higher income group were living together in such a relationship. Nevertheless for all age groups more unemployed persons were in de facto relationships than any other group in the labour force.

**TABLE 4. PERSONS IN DE FACTO RELATIONSHIPS AND REGISTERED MARRIAGES:
AGE, BIRTHPLACE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS, AUSTRALIA, 1982**

	<i>In de facto relationships</i>	<i>In registered marriages Per cent</i>	<i>Persons in married(a) couples '000</i>
PERSONS UNDER 35 YEARS			
<i>Birthplace</i>			
Australia	11.1	88.9	1,768.2
Main English-speaking countries	13.2	86.8	275.0
Other	3.7	96.3	341.1
<i>Occupation/Employment Status</i>			
Prof./Admin.	9.3	90.7	331.9
Clerical/Sales	12.2	87.8	367.0
Farmers, trades, etc.	12.7	87.3	528.8
Service	16.4	83.6	141.0
Unemployed	23.2	76.8	118.8
Not in labour force	5.1	94.9	583.0
<i>Income Unit Income</i>			
Less than \$250	12.9	87.1	377.9
\$250-499	9.8	90.2	1,158.2
\$500 and over	9.8	90.2	848.1
Total	10.3	89.7	2,384.2

**TABLE 4. PERSONS IN DE FACTO RELATIONSHIPS AND REGISTERED MARRIAGES:
AGE, BIRTHPLACE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS, AUSTRALIA, 1982—continued**

	<i>In de facto relationships</i>	<i>In registered marriages</i>	<i>Persons in married(a) couples '000</i>
	<i>Per cent</i>		
PERSONS 35 YEARS AND OVER			
<i>Birthplace</i>			
Australia	2.1	97.9	3,282.9
Main English-speaking countries	2.3	97.7	619.3
Other	1.3	98.7	833.6
<i>Occupation/Employment Status</i>			
Prof./ Admin.	2.7	97.3	487.5
Clerical/ Sales	2.7	97.3	410.0
Farmers, trades, etc.	2.6	97.4	822.3
Service	2.5	97.5	247.7
Unemployed	6.3	93.7	109.2
Not in labour force	1.1	98.9	1,877.8
<i>Income Unit Income</i>			
Less than \$250	1.5	98.5	1,677.9
\$250-499	2.3	97.7	1,370.9
\$500 and over	2.8	97.2	1,388.7
Total	2.1	97.9	4,437.5

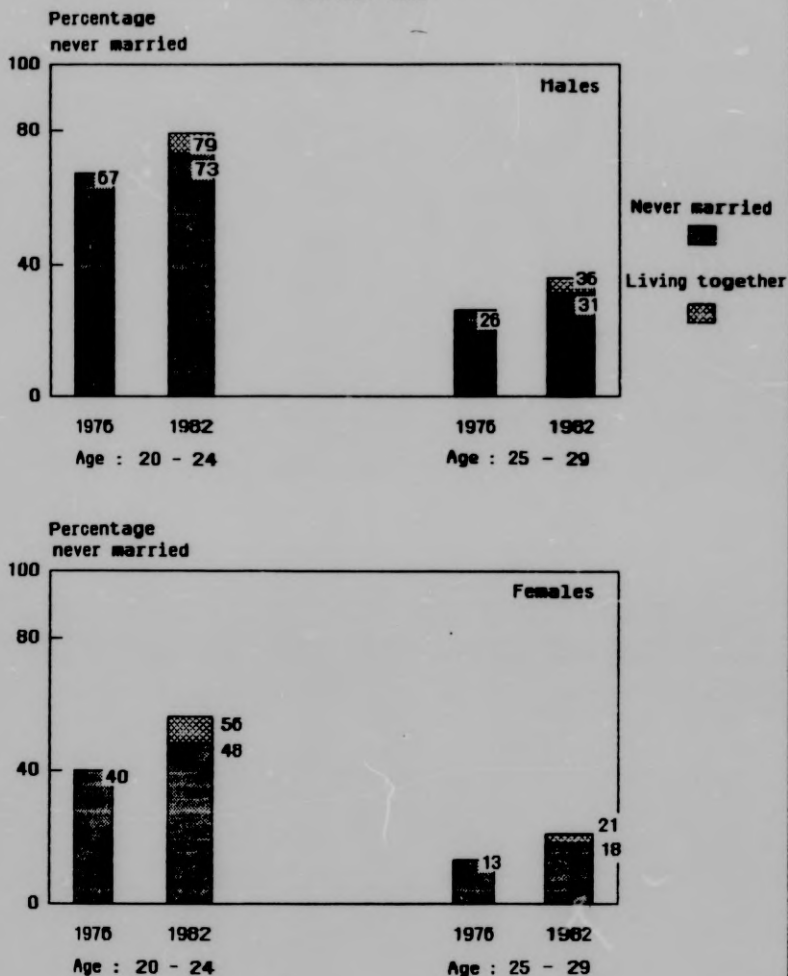
(a) Married couples include both registered married and de facto couples.

Source: Families Survey, 1982.

If the never married men and women who were living together in de facto relationships were considered as married instead of never married, then the proportions never married in the age groups 20-24 years and 25-29 years would be lower by 6-8 and 3-5 percentage points respectively (Figure 2). For example, among men aged 20-24 years in 1982, 79 per cent were never married but this included 6 per cent who were never married and in de facto relationships. If these 6 per cent were considered as married, then only 73 per cent were never married. However, this is still higher than the proportion never married in 1976, which was 67 per cent. The same pattern is observed among women aged 20-24 years and among both men and women aged 25-29 years.

There appears then to have recently been a real decline in the proportions of men and women entering into 'marriage' relationships by age 30 years.

FIGURE 2: MEN AND WOMEN AGED 20-29: PERCENTAGE NEVER MARRIED,
1976 AND 1982



Source: ABS Population Census 1976

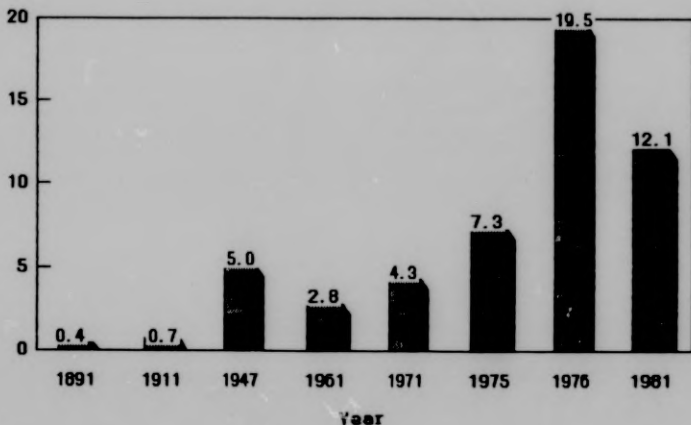
ABS Families Survey 1982

SECTION 3—MARITAL DISSOLUTION

For a significant proportion of the population, dissolution of marriage occurs because of marital breakdown. For every 1,000 married couples in 1961, 4 marriages were dissolved that year by divorce and 18 by the death of a spouse. By comparison in 1981, 12 marriages were dissolved by divorce and 14 by death of a spouse⁶.

Figure 3 illustrates the trend in the rate of divorce from 1891 to 1981. Apart from a rise in the rate during and after the Second World War, partly reversed by 1961, the divorce rate has exhibited a steady increase since the last century. In 1891, there was less than 1 divorce per 1,000 married women⁷. By 1971 there were 4 and in 1975 there were 7 divorces per 1,000 married women. After the peak of 19.5 divorces per 1,000 married women in 1976, the steady increase was reversed; in 1981 it was 12 per 1,000 married women.

**FIGURE 3: NUMBER OF DIVORCES PER 1000 WOMEN,
1891-1981**



Sources: ABS Population Census 1891, 1911, 1947, 1961, 1971, 1976, 1981.

ABS Demography Bulletin No 82, 1964

ABS Divorces, Australia 1971, 1981

ABS Social Indicators No 4 1984

6. Because the number of deaths is affected by the age structure of the population, the rates of marital dissolution through death have been standardised according to the age distribution of married persons in 1961.

7. The number of divorces per 1,000 married females is the same as the number of divorces per 1,000 married males.

The increase in the divorce rate in 1976 followed the introduction of the *Family Law Act 1975*. This Act repealed the Matrimonial Causes legislation which had been operative since 1961 and had provided that a dissolution could be granted on one or more of fourteen grounds (such as adultery, desertion and cruelty). The *Family Law Act 1975* allows dissolution of marriage on the ground of irretrievable breakdown, established by the husband and wife having lived apart for at least 12 months and there being no reasonable likelihood of reconciliation. These features also had an effect on both the numbers of people who have never divorced but remain permanently separated, and on the length of time between separation and divorce.

The Families Survey indicated that in 1982 approximately 99,000 males and 150,000 females over age 15 years were separated, but not divorced, from their spouse⁸. This constituted 2 per cent of all persons over 15 years of age. In the same year, 4 per cent of the population over age 15 years were divorced and not remarried.

Table 5 illustrates the changing trend from 1966 to 1981 in the relative proportions of those whose marital status was 'permanently separated' and of those whose marital status was 'divorced'. Up until the 1981 Census, the proportions of ever married males and females who were divorced were always lower than the proportions who were permanently separated. The effects of the Family Law Act may be seen by 1981, when 5 per cent of ever married males and females were divorced and 3 per cent of ever married males and 4 per cent of ever married females were separated.

**TABLE 5. SEPARATED AND DIVORCED PERSONS,
AUSTRALIA, 1966-1981**

	Males			Females		
	Separated	Divorced	Total ever married	Separated	Divorced	Total ever married
	Per cent of ever married males		Number	Per cent of ever married females		Number
1966	3	2	2,832,407	3	2	3,179,999
1971	3	2	3,204,470	3	2	3,609,608
1976	3	3	3,462,401	3	3	3,925,190
1981	3	5	3,727,802	4	5	4,261,304

Source: Population Censuses, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1981.

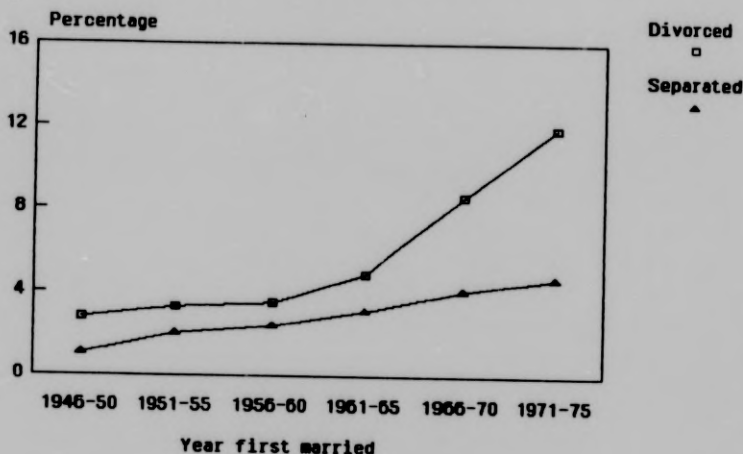
Of course the total population which has been divorced also includes those persons who subsequently remarried. The Families Survey indicated that, among the ever married population, approximately 11 per cent (874,000 persons) dissolved their first marriage by divorce, and approximately 3 per cent (220,000 persons) had ended their first marriage in permanent separation.

Figure 4 presents data on the proportion of ever married women whose first marriage had ended in divorce or separation by the ninth year of that marriage. This population includes those women who had divorced and remarried by that time. The data suggest that the proportions who have separated or divorced by the ninth year have both increased over time, with the proportions divorcing always being higher. However, the rate of increase for both groups has been different; for example, the proportions who had separated by the ninth year of marriage rose only from 1 per cent of women who first married between 1946 and 1950 to approximately 5 per cent of women who first married between 1971 and 1975.

The increase has been more marked for those women who had divorced by the ninth year of their first marriage. Although only 3 per cent of women married between 1946 and 1950 had been divorced nine years later, this had risen to 12 per cent of women who first married between 1971 and 1975.

8. These figures include those persons living in de facto relationships and whose previous marriage had ended in separation.

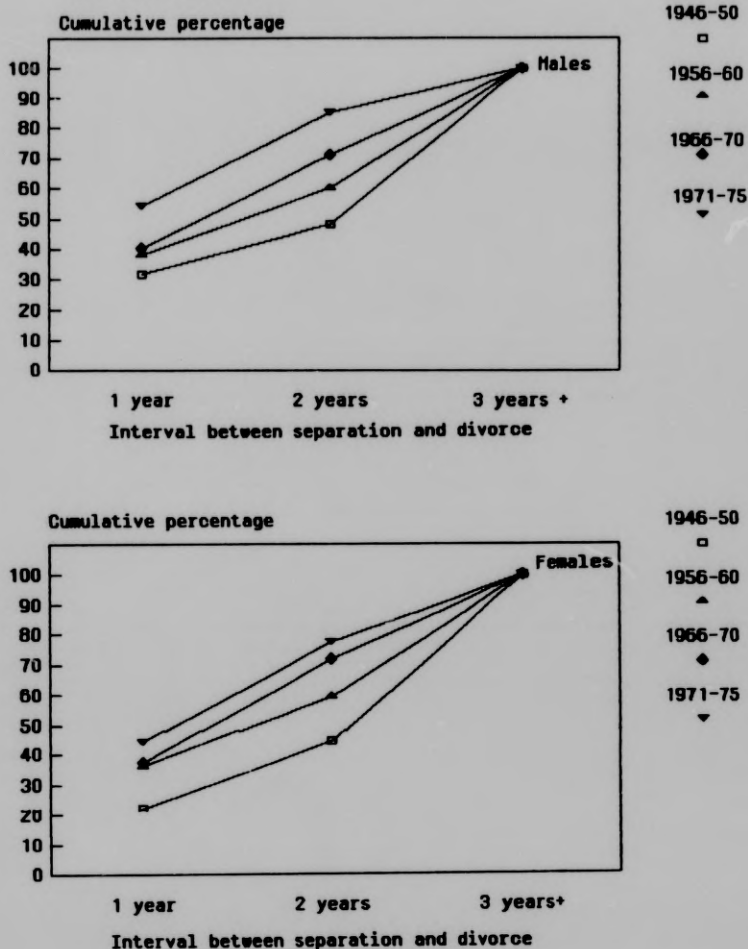
FIGURE 4: PERCENTAGE DIVORCED AND SEPARATED BY THE NINTH YEAR OF THEIR FIRST MARRIAGE, 1946-1975



Source: ABS Families Survey 1982

The 1975 Act has had a marked effect on the length of time that a couple, on average, remain separated before divorcing. Among divorced men and women who first married in the years 1971-75, a very high proportion experienced a separation of only 1-2 years before being granted a divorce (Figure 5). The period of separation prior to divorce had been steadily decreasing with each marriage cohort since the war, with the proportions who remained separated for 3 or more years being markedly lower among those married in the early seventies. For example, 54 per cent of divorced females first married in 1946-50 experienced a separation of 3 or more years; for females married in 1956-60 this proportion had fallen to 39 per cent, while only 22 per cent of divorced women who married in 1971-75 experienced a separation of that duration.

FIGURE 5: FIRST MARRIAGES ENDING IN DIVORCE:
INTERVAL BETWEEN SEPARATION AND DIVORCE AND
YEAR FIRST MARRIED



Source: ABS Families Survey 1982

However, the decrease in period of separation before divorce does not appear to account entirely for the relative decline in length of marriages which ended in divorce. In the early 1970's the median duration of dissolved marriages was 11.9 years; by 1977 it was 10.9 years and by 1982 it was 10.4 years. However one-fifth of divorces in 1982 followed a duration of marriage of less than 5 years and a further 28 per cent lasted for 5-9 years. Among divorces occurring in 1982, first marriages had a longer duration than marriages involving a previously divorced person. The former had a median duration of 11.1 years while the latter had a median duration of 5.8 years⁹.

Divorcing couples tend to be relatively young. The median age of persons who divorced during 1977-82 was 36 years for males and 33 years for females. However, the Families Survey showed that of the approximately 402,000 men and 480,000 women in the 1982 population who had ever been divorced, nearly one-third of the men and half of the women were divorced by the age of 30 years. In 1981, the divorce rate was highest for persons aged 25-29 years: 23 out of every 1,000 married persons in that age group were divorced in 1981. After age 30 years, the divorce rate decreased with increasing age (Table 6).

TABLE 6. AGE-SPECIFIC DIVORCE RATES, AUSTRALIA, 1981
(Per 1,000 married men and women(a))

Age (years)	Male	Female
Under 25	14.3	18.5
25-29	23.3	22.4
30-34	19.4	17.2
35-39	16.3	14.8
40-44	13.6	11.9
45-49	11.0	9.0
50-54	8.4	6.4
55-59	5.5	4.2
60 and over	2.4	1.8
All ages	12.1	12.1

(a) Includes those who were separated but not divorced.

Source: Divorces, Australia, 1981 (3307.0); Population Census, 1981.

Nevertheless, the increase in divorce rates in the 1970's has affected all age groups. Nine per cent of men and women aged 30-39 years in 1982 had been divorced by the age of 30 years. By comparison, only 2 per cent of those aged 50-59 years had been divorced by age 30 years, but an additional 7 per cent had divorced by the age of 50 years (Table 7).

TABLE 7. PERSONS EVER DIVORCED : AGE BY WHICH DIVORCED BY CURRENT AGE, AUSTRALIA, 1982

Current age group(years)	Age by which divorced (years)		
	30	40	50
	Per cent of current age group		
30-39	9	(a)13	..
40-49	3	10	(a)13
50-59	2	5	9

(a) Per cent divorced at time of survey.

Source: Families Survey, 1982.

Persons who marry at relatively young ages are more likely to experience marital breakdown. The Families Survey indicated that 26 per cent of men and 21 per cent of women who had married by the age of 20 years had separated within five years of marriage, compared with only 14 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women who had married between the ages of 20 and 24 years (Table 8). The survey also indicated that the proportion of persons who marry before the age of 20 years whose first marriage had a duration of less than 1 year was higher than for such persons first marrying at an older age.

⁹ Divorces, Australia, 1982 (3307.0)

TABLE 8. PERSONS FIRST MARRIED BEFORE 1977: PER CENT SEPARATED WITHIN 5 YEARS ACCORDING TO SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS, AUSTRALIA, 1982

Characteristics	Per cent separated within five years	
	Males	Females
<i>Age at first marriage (years)</i>		
Under 20		
20-24	26.5	21.3
25 and over	14.3	12.8
	9.6	8.2
<i>Birthplace</i>		
Australia		
Main English-speaking countries	13.6	14.9
Italy and Greece	17.0	18.0
Other European	4.8	4.1
Other	13.6	14.4
	11.6	13.4

Source: Families Survey, 1982.

Persons from certain ethnic backgrounds also exhibit different tendencies toward marital breakdown. Two groups of particular interest in Australia are persons born in Italy and Greece, who are more likely to remain married than persons born in Australia or the main English-speaking countries. Only 4.5 per cent of Italian-born and Greek-born men and women had experienced separation within five years of their first marriage, compared with 14 per cent of Australian-born men and 15 per cent of Australian-born women (Table 8).

The number of children born to a marriage has been suggested as a factor related to the likelihood of separation and divorce. The Families Survey provided data on all ever married males and females, the outcome of their first marriage and the number of offspring born to that marriage. These data suggest that more males and females who had only one or no offspring ended their marriage in divorce; 17 per cent of ever married females and 16 per cent of ever married males with one offspring ended their first marriage in divorce. However, only 7 per cent of females and 6 per cent of males with four or more offspring ended their first marriage in divorce. Corresponding figures are presented in Table 9 for women aged 45-49 years; generally this group of women have completed their childbearing years. Among those women with no offspring from their first marriage, 45 per cent had ended their first marriage in divorce.

As well as having fewer offspring from their first marriage, those women who divorced from their first spouse did so while their children were relatively young. For example, among those women with only one child at the end of their first marriage, 68 per cent obtained a divorce before their child was 4 years of age and a further 21 per cent had been divorced by the time their child was 9 years of age.

TABLE 9. EVER MARRIED FEMALES AGED 45-49 YEARS(a): OUTCOME OF FIRST MARRIAGE AND NUMBER OF OFFSPRING(b), AUSTRALIA, 1982

MARRIAGE AND NUMBER OF OFFSPRING(b), AUSTRALIA, 1982				
	Marital outcome			Total '000
	Still married(c)	Separated(c)	Divorced(c)	
	Per cent			
No offspring	54	*	46	20.3
1 offspring	71	*	27	26.5
2 offspring	84	*	15	89.4
3 offspring	90	*	9	89.9
4 or more offspring	87	*	11	108.6

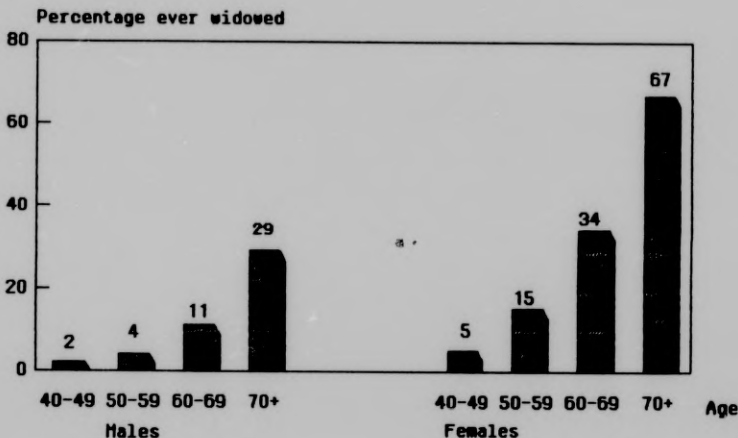
(a) Excludes those women whose first marriage ended in widowhood. (b) Refers to offspring born to their first marriage. (c) For those still married, number of offspring refers to those children born to the marriage up until the time of the survey. For those separated or divorced, number of offspring is as at the end of the first marriage.

Source: Families Survey, 1982.

One aspect of divorce which deserves attention is the small but increasing proportion of divorces in which one or both partners had previously been divorced. This group constituted about 6.5 per cent of all divorces in 1977, but by 1982 10.3 per cent of both males and females who were divorced in that year stated that their marital status was 'divorced' at the time of their marriage ¹⁰. With the increase in numbers of divorced persons remarrying these figures may well increase; for example, approximately 8 per cent of marriages registered in the years 1971-75 involved a previously divorced partner; by 1982 this figure had increased to approximately 20 per cent ¹¹.

The Families Survey showed that 5 per cent of all ever married men and 15 per cent of all ever married women in 1982 had been widowed. Obviously the proportions are higher for older people (Figure 6); 11 per cent of ever married men aged 60-69 years and 34 per cent of ever married women of the same age group had been widowed. Among ever married persons aged 70 years and over, nearly one-third of the men and two-thirds of the women had been widowed. This difference between men and women is due to higher male mortality rates and also to the fact that husbands on average are a few years older than their wives.

FIGURE 6: PERCENTAGE OF EVER WIDOWED PERSONS: CURRENT AGE



Source: ABS Families Survey 1982

Many people whose marriages have ended in divorce or widowhood do not remain unmarried but enter into a marriage-like relationship or remarry after some time. The following section examines patterns of remarriage after divorce or widowhood.

¹⁰. *Marriages, Australia, 1982* (3306.0)

¹¹. *Ibid*

SECTION 4—REMARriage

In 1911, 10 per cent of marriages involved a previously married person¹². In 1982, one out of three marriages involved one or both partners who had been married before¹³. Whereas in 1911 most of the previously married brides and grooms had been widows or widowers, most of those in 1982 were divorced persons. In addition, remarriage is now more frequent among divorced than widowed persons because the divorced are usually younger than the widowed. Men are more likely to remarry than women. The remarriage rate in 1981 for men was 131 per 1,000 divorced men while for women it was 97 per 1,000 divorced women; the rates for widowed persons were 23 for men and 6 for women¹⁴.

Remarriage of women after divorce would seem to be affected more by age at divorce than by the number of children they have at divorce (Table 10). Two-thirds of all women who divorced before the age of 30 years had remarried by the time of the Families Survey 1982. Among women who were divorced in their thirties, those with no children or one child were more likely to remarry than those with 2 or more children. Still, about half of women who were divorced in their thirties with 2 or more children had remarried. Two-thirds of women who were divorced in their forties were still unmarried at the time of the survey.

**TABLE 10. PERSONS EVER DIVORCED WHO HAVE REMARRIED(a):
NUMBER OF OFFSPRING AT DIVORCE AND AGE AT DIVORCE,
AUSTRALIA, 1982**

Age at divorce (years)	Number of offspring at divorce				Total remarried	
	0	1	2	3 or more		
MALES						
	Remarried as percentage of divorced					' 000
Under 30	67	62	80	*	68	87.7
30-39	66	64	64	61	64	93.9
40-49	*	*	56	51	54	44.6
Under 50	67	61	66	56	63	226.2
	' 000					
Under 50	69.9	50.5	62.1	43.8	226.2	
FEMALES						
	Remarried as percentage of divorced					' 000
Under 30	65	66	66	66	66	141.8
30-39	65	59	48	48	53	82.8
40-49	*	*	36	36	35	27.7
Under 50	64	61	53	47	56	252.3
	' 000					
Under 50	75.8	69.8	55.9	50.7	252.3	

(a) This does not include those who have entered de facto relationships after divorcing.

Source: Families Survey, 1982.

Age at divorce has less effect on the remarriage of divorced men. About two-thirds of men divorced before the age of 40 years had remarried by the time of the survey.

The numbers of divorced men and women who remarry are affected by the time interval since divorce. Men re-enter a marriage-like relationship more quickly after divorce than women (Figure 7). Among all persons divorced for less than three years, one-third of the men but less than one-fifth of the women had remarried. A slightly higher proportion of males than females were also in de facto relationships: 17 per cent of men compared with 14 per cent of women. The proportion of persons who remarry rises with increases in the duration of time since divorce, while the proportion of persons who enter de facto relationships does not increase. Among those who had been divorced from 9 to 10 years, 68 per cent of the men and 59 per cent of the women had remarried.

12. Population Census, 1911

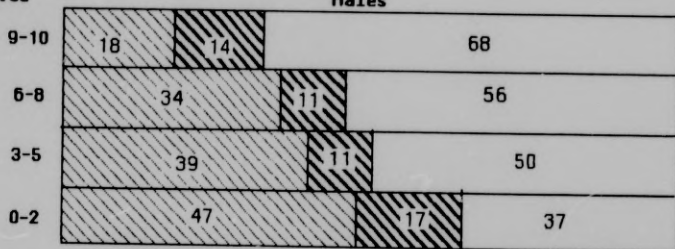
13. Marriages, Australia, 1982 (3306.0)

14. Population Census, 1981; Marriages, Australia, 1981 (3306.0)

FIGURE 7: PERSONS WHO HAD BEEN DIVORCED:
CURRENT MARITAL STATUS AND YEARS SINCE DIVORCE, 1982

Years since
divorce

Males



Divorced



De facto

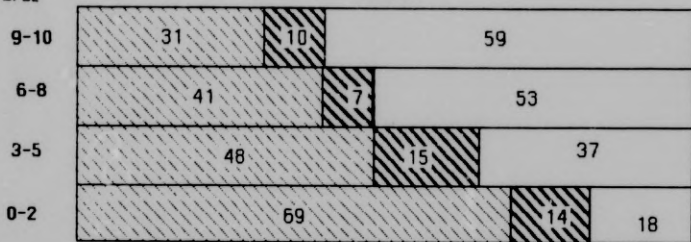


Remarried



Years since
divorce

Females



0 ← Percent → 100

Source: ABS Families Survey 1982

Likelihood of remarriage of widowed persons depends more on age at widowhood than on number of children at widowhood. Men who were widowed before the age of 50 years were as likely to remarry as divorced men. Two-thirds of men widowed before the age of 50 years had remarried by the time of the survey, compared with 39 per cent of those widowed in their fifties and 12 per cent of those widowed after the age of 60 years. Among women, 40 per cent of those widowed before age 50 years were remarried. However, the proportion remarrying dropped sharply with older ages at widowhood: only 8 per cent of those widowed in their fifties had remarried and virtually none of those who were widowed after the age of 60 years had remarried (Table 11).

**TABLE 11. PERSONS WHOSE FIRST MARRIAGE ENDED IN
WIDOWHOOD WHO HAVE REMARRIED:
NUMBER OF OFFSPRING AT WIDOWHOOD AND
AGE AT WIDOWHOOD, AUSTRALIA, 1982**

Age at widowhood (years)	Number of offspring at widowhood			Total remarried
	0-1	2 or more		
	Remarried as percentage of widowed			
MALES				
Under 50	77	64	69	53.3
50-59	41	38	39	15.8
60 and over	*	*	12	9.2
FEMALES				
Under 50	51	34	40	97.5
50-59	*	7	8	13.0
60 and over	*	*	*	*

Source: Families Survey, 1982.

Men and women who were widowed before the age of 50 years with no children or one child were more likely to remarry than those who had two or more children. Among the men, 77 per cent of those with less than 2 children had remarried compared with 64 per cent of those with 2 or more children. Among the women, half of those with less than 2 children had remarried compared with one-third of those with 2 or more children (Table 11).

The Families Survey showed that in 1982 about 696,000 persons, 9 per cent of all ever married persons, had married more than once. However, only 34,000 individuals (less than 1 per cent of the ever married) had married three or more times. As to be expected, a greater proportion of older people had married more than once: 11 per cent of those aged 50 years and over. Persons born in Australia and the main English-speaking countries were more likely to have married two or more times than persons born in Greece, Italy or other countries.

SECTION 5—MARRIAGE AND MARITAL DISSOLUTION: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE OLDER GENERATION

This report concludes with an overview of the marriage and marital dissolution patterns experienced by the cohort of men and women now aged 50 years and over. How many of them had experienced the events discussed here, and at what age? How many were first married by age 20 years? How many had their marriages ended by age 30 years? How many were still in their first marriage at age 50 years? Data on marriage history collected in the Families Survey make possible an examination of these and similar questions. To simplify the discussion, those whose marriages had ended are grouped into a single 'not married' state, not distinguishing between separated, divorced, or widowed.

Nine per cent of males and 30 per cent of females of this cohort were married before the age of 20 years. By age 30 years, 78 per cent of males and 86 per cent of females had been married. Few remained single by age 50 years: only 6-7 per cent of both males and females were still never married at age 50 years.

Partly because of their younger age at marriage, 6 per cent of all women had experienced the dissolution of their first marriage by age 30 years, compared with 4 per cent of the men. Marital dissolution was high among those who were married before the age of 20 years: 5 per cent had experienced a marital dissolution before age 30 years. However, a majority of those whose marriages dissolved before age 30 years were remarried within 10 years, a pattern similar to that observed earlier for persons in all age groups: 3-5 per cent of all men and women in the cohort were in their second (or third) marriage at the age of 40 years.

Marital stability was relatively high. Nearly 74 per cent of ever married women and 80 per cent of ever married men were still in their first marriage at age 50 years; 6-7 per cent of both the women and the men were in their second (or third) marriage. However, about 1 out of 8 women who had been married was single again at age 50 years because of separation, divorce or widowhood; so was 1 out of 12 ever married men. When the never married were included with the separated, divorced or widowed, approximately 1 out of 5 women and 1 out of 7 men in the cohort were single at age 50 years.

Of the men and women now aged 50 years and over, many first married in the 1940's and 1950's, during the 'marriage boom' years. Many married young, especially the women, and few remained unmarried by age 50 years. Widowhood at earlier ages was also the experience of some because of the Second World War. The recent changes in marriage patterns reviewed earlier indicate that the experience of younger cohorts, men and women now in their 20's, 30's and 40's, may be different in some respects. A lower proportion may be in their first marriage at age 50 years because of higher divorce rates and a potential trend away from very high marriage rates. However, the current tendency to delay first marriage may operate in the long run to stabilise or even reduce the current divorce rates. A higher proportion of younger cohorts will be in their second or third marriage if a majority continues to remarry after divorce, and a higher proportion may find themselves still unmarried, or single again, at age 50 years.