

### SF3.1: Marriage and divorce rates

#### *Definitions and methodology*

This indicator presents information on marriages through two measures:

- *The crude marriage rate* (CMR), defined as the number of marriages during the year per 1000 people.
- *The mean age at first marriage*, defined as the mean age in years of the people who get married at the time of marriage. This measure is disaggregated by sex with separate averages for men and women.

Divorce is captured by one measure:

- *The crude divorce rate* (CDR), defined as the number of divorces during the year per 1000 people.

#### *Key findings*

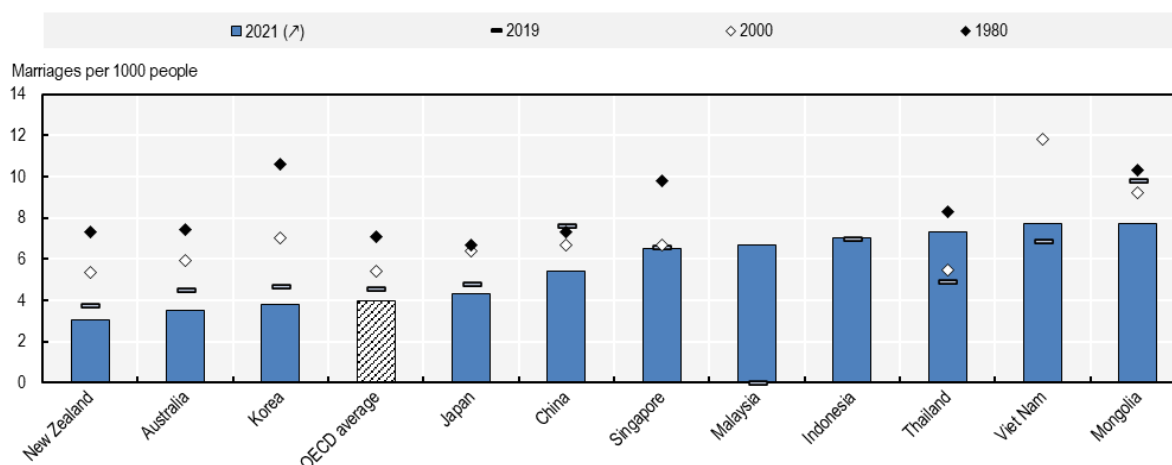
Compared to the OECD average, marriage rates are relatively high in most countries of the Asia/Pacific region, but there is considerable variation from one country to another (Chart SF3.1.A). Among the covered Asia/Pacific countries, the 2021 crude marriage rates were highest in Mongolia and Viet Nam (7.7 marriages per 1000 people). The lowest rates were recorded for Korea (3.8 marriages per 1000 people), Australia (3.5) and New Zealand (3.1), all below the average for OECD countries (4.0).

In some of the Asia/Pacific countries included here, crude marriage rates were lower in 2019 than in previous decades (Chart SF3.1.A). In Korea, for example, the 2019 crude marriage rate (4.7 marriages per 1000 people) is 2 points lower than it was in 2000 (7.0 marriages per 1000 people), and almost 7 points lower than in 1980 (9.2). In Japan, the marriage rate was broadly the same in 2019, 2000 and 1980 - at 6.4 to 6.7 marriages per 1000 persons.

In 2020 and 2021, marriage rates declined further with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2019 and 2021, they declined in all countries except Thailand and Viet Nam.

*Other relevant indicators:* SF1.1 Family size and composition; SF2.4 Share of births outside of marriage; SF3.2 Family dissolution and children

Chart SF3.1.A. **Crude marriage rate, 1980, 2000, 2019 and 2021 or latest available year**  
 Marriages per 1000 people



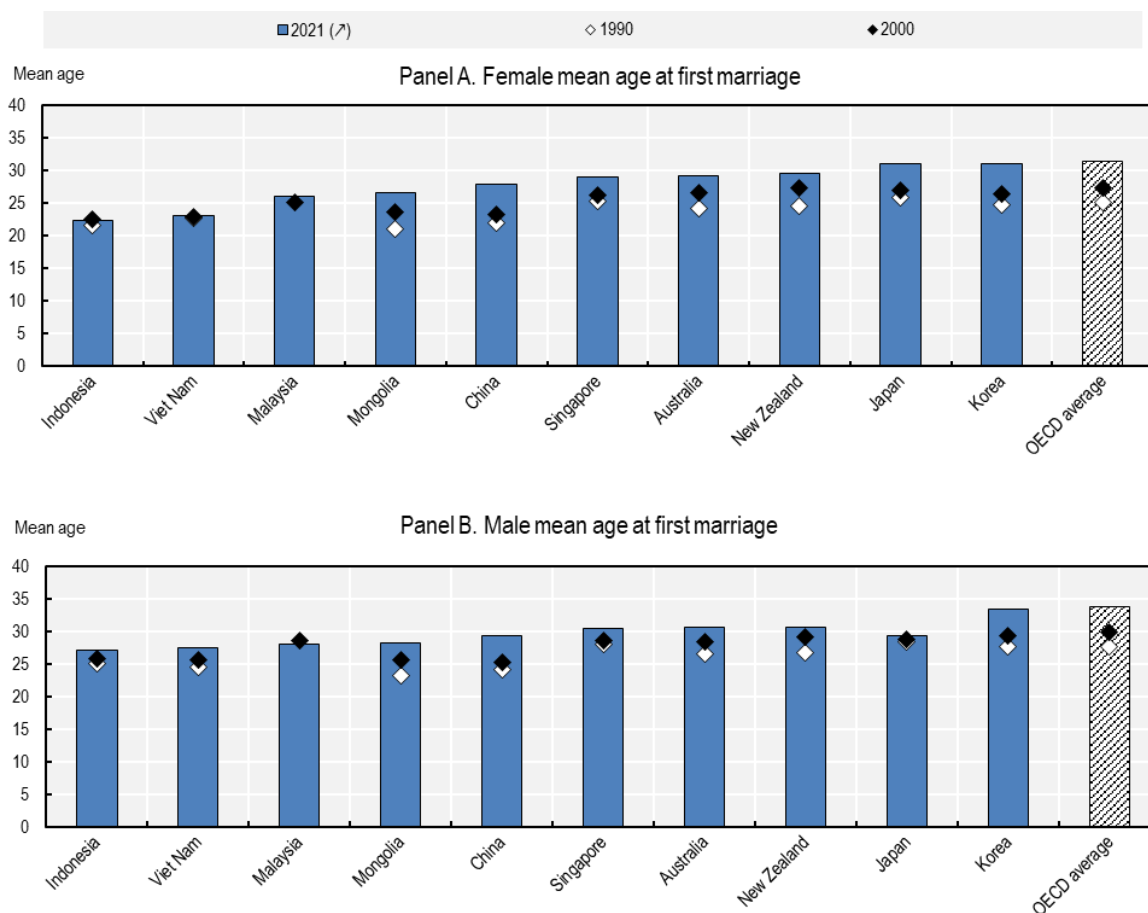
Note: Data for 2021 refer to 2020 for Japan and to 2016 for Indonesia; data for 2000 refer to 2003 for Viet Nam; and data for 1980 refer to 1993 for Thailand. Data for New Zealand include civil unions. The OECD average refers to the unweighted average across the 35 OECD member countries with available and comparable data. See [OECD Family Database](#) Indicator SF3.1 for more detail.

Sources: Australia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand and OECD average: [OECD Family Database](#); China: Ministry of Civil Affairs (2022), China Civil Affairs Statistical Yearbook; Indonesia: [Statistics Indonesia](#) and [World Bank Population Data](#); Malaysia: DOSM, Marriage and Divorce Statistics 2021; Mongolia: [Population Statistics](#); Singapore: Department of Statistics Singapore (2022), Statistics on Marriages and Divorces; Thailand: Department of Provincial Administration (2021) Population and Housing Census; Viet Nam: Ministry of Justice (2021).

In Asia/Pacific countries and in most OECD countries the average age at which both men and women first marry has increased markedly over the past couple of decades (Chart SF3.1.B). For women (Panel A), all covered countries have seen the average age at first marriage increase since 1990. In the Asia/Pacific region, the largest increases have taken place in OECD countries: Australia, Japan, and New Zealand (approximately a 5-year increase) and particularly in Korea (6.3 years). Together with Singapore, these four countries have the highest current female mean ages at first marriage at over 29 years of age. The highest is found in Korea, with 31.1 years, almost the same level as the average across OECD countries (31.5).

For men (Panel B), mean ages at first marriage have also increased in all covered countries and, in most cases, they have increased by more years for men than for women. The largest increases since 1990 have taken place in Korea (5.6 years). Once again, the highest current mean age is also found in OECD countries and Singapore, at over 30.5 years of age. The highest is Korea (33.4). However, despite these increases average ages at first marriage remain relatively low in Asia/Pacific countries – for example, in all covered Asia/Pacific countries mean ages at first marriage remain lower than the average for OECD countries in 2021 (33.8).

Chart SF3.1.B. Mean age at first marriage by sex, 1990, 2000 and 2021 or latest available year

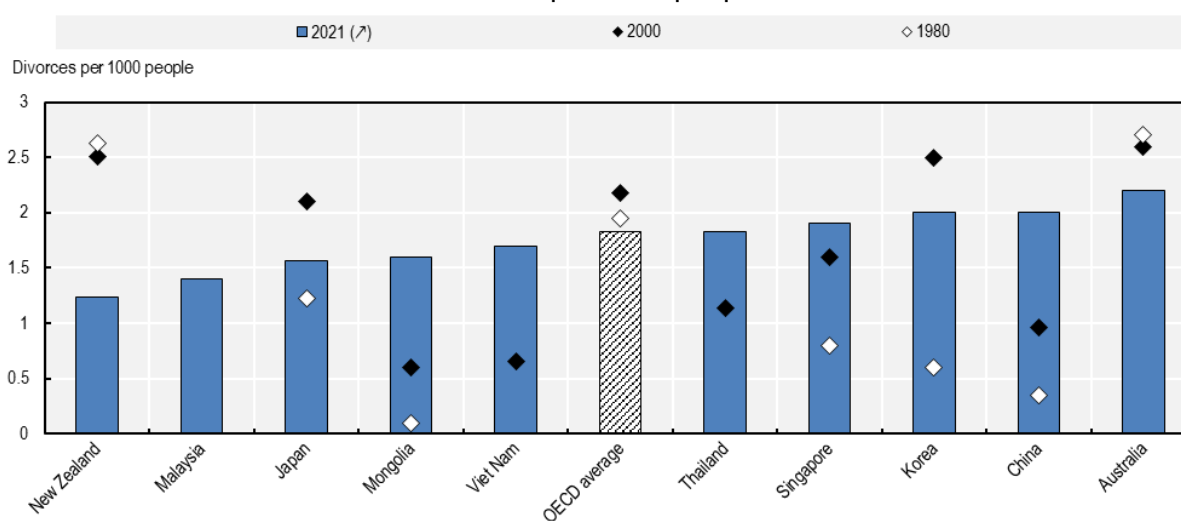


Note: ta for 2021 refer to 2019 for Viet Nam, and to 2020 for Australia, China, Japan, Malaysia and Mongolia. Data for 2000 refer to 2001 for Viet Nam. Data for Australia and New Zealand refer to median age at first marriage. Data for New Zealand include civil unions. From 2007 onwards, data include those who transferred their civil union to marriage. he OECD average refers to the unweighted average across the 26 OECD member countries with available and comparable data. See [OECD Family Database](#) Indicator SF3.1 for more detail.

Sources: Australia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand and OECD average: [OECD Family Database](#); China: Ministry of Civil Affairs (2022), China Civil Affairs Statistical Yearbook; Indonesia: World Bank, [Gender Statistics](#), various sources; Malaysia: DOSM, Marriage and Divorce Statistics 2021; Mongolia: [Population Statistics](#); Singapore: Department of Statistics Singapore (2022), Statistics on Marriages and Divorces; Thailand: Department of Provincial Administration (2021), Population and Housing Census; Viet Nam: Population Census 1989,1999, 2009 2019; Population Dynamic Surveys 2001-2012; Statistics on Marriages & Divorces 2013.

In the Asia/Pacific region as also in many OECD countries, one of the most striking demographic developments in recent decades has been the increase in the frequency of divorce (Chart SF3.1.C). In Asia/Pacific countries included here, except for OECD countries, crude divorce rates are far higher today than they were in 1980. In China, the crude divorce rate in 2021 (2.0 divorces per 1000 people) was twice as high as in 2000 (1.0), and five times higher than in 1980 (0.4). In OECD countries crude divorce rates have decreased since 2000. In Japan and Korea, they significantly increased between 1980 (0.6) and 2000 (2.5) but have decreased over the last two decades (2.0 in 2021). In Australia and New Zealand crude divorce rates were already among the highest in 1980 but have been decreasing since then, although at lower rates. In 2021, Australia still has the highest crude divorce rate (2.2) and New Zealand was the country with the lowest rate in 2021 (1.2).

Chart SF3.1.C. **Crude divorce rate, 1980, 2000 and 2021 or latest available year**  
 Divorces per 1000 people



Note: Data for 2021 refer to 2020 for Japan and Thailand; and data for 1980 refer to 1985 for New Zealand. The OECD average refers to the unweighted average across the 31 OECD member countries with available and comparable data. See [OECD Family Database](https://www.oecd.org/fdb/) Indicator SF3.1 for more detail.

Sources: Australia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand and OECD average: [OECD Family Database](https://www.oecd.org/fdb/); China: Ministry of Civil Affairs, Civil Affairs Statistical Yearbook 2022; Indonesia: Statistics Indonesia; Malaysia: DOSM, Marriage and Divorce Statistics 2021; Mongolia: [Population Statistics](https://www.statistics.mn/); Singapore: Department of Statistics Singapore (2021), Statistics on Marriages and Divorces; Thailand: Department of Provincial Administration (2021); Viet Nam: Ministry of Justice (2021).

See also the distribution of married persons by previous marital status in the accompanying Ms Excel file.

### Comparability and data issues

For all countries, data on marriage and divorce are based on civil registration statistics. In some covered countries (e.g. Australia and New Zealand), partners who live together for a specified period of time have a similar legal status as a married couple. These couples are not taken into account in marriage statistics and are not included here.

Divorce is possible in all covered Asia/Pacific countries, though divorce laws do vary from country to country. These variations influence the length and nature of the divorce process, and should be borne in mind when comparing divorce rates across countries.

#### Sources and further reading:

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019), *World Marriage Data 2019*, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/data/world-marriage-data>; Eurostat (2023) *Statistics Explained: Marriage and divorce statistics - new ways of living together in the EU*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Marriage\\_and\\_divorce\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Marriage_and_divorce_statistics).