

MARRIAGE STATISTICS BRIEF 2024



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PREFACE

This annual brief offers a comprehensive and detailed analysis of civil and common law marriages officially registered with the Department of Civil and National Registration (CNR) through its vital events registration service. As a cornerstone of societal structure, the institution of marriage undergoes continuous evolution, and this brief aims to provide invaluable insights into its contemporary dynamics and trends within the nation.

Drawing exclusively from the robust dataset of registered vital events, this publication meticulously highlights key trends in the volume and characteristics of marriages. Specifically, it disaggregates registered marriage data across a range of crucial demographic and socio-economic variables for both the bride and groom. These include, but are not limited to, the month of occurrence, enabling the identification of seasonal patterns in marriage registrations; the specific type of marriage (civil or common law), offering clarity on legal frameworks chosen by couples; detailed age profiles, which illuminate marriage age trends; education levels, providing insights into the educational attainment of marrying individuals; their respective places of residence, aiding in the understanding of geographical distribution and urban-rural disparities; and their previous marital status, which helps to categorize unions as first marriages, remarriages, or other classifications.

It is imperative to note that the scope of this brief is strictly limited to marriages that have undergone formal registration with the Department of Civil and National Registration. Consequently, this analysis does not encompass marriages solemnized solely under religious or traditional cultural customs, which are not formally recorded within the CNR's vital events database. This delineation is crucial for interpreting the data accurately and understanding the specific population group represented within this report.



Dr. Lucky Mokgathe
Acting Statistician General
July 2025

CONTENTS

PREFACE	i
List of Tables	ii
List of Figures	ii
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Findings	1
2.1 Trends in Marriage (2015-2024)	1
2.2 District of Registration	2
2.3 District of usual residence of bride and groom – 2024	2
2.4 Month of Registration	3
2.5 Type of Marriage	3
2.6 Age at the time of marriage	4
2.7 Age differentials	7
2.8 Previous Marital Status	8
2.9 First marriages and Re-marriages	8
2.10 Crude Marriage Rate (CMR)	9

LIST OF TABLES

Table M1: A Summary of Marriages-2014-2024.....	10
Table M2: Age in combination at marriage time-2024.....	11
Table M3: Age at the time of marriage by previous marital status and sex-2024.....	11
Table M4: Distribution of groom's by district of residence at the time of marriage and age -2024.....	12
Table M5: Distribution of bride's by district of residence at the time of marriage and age -2024.....	13
Table M6: Previous marital status of person marrying-2015-2024.....	14

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Crude Marriage Rate 2015-2024.....	1
Figure 2: Percentage distribution of marriages by district of registration - 2024.....	2
Figure 2a: Marriages by place of usual residence of bride and groom -2024	2
Figure 3: Registered marriages by month of registration – 2024.....	3
Figure 4: Percentage registered marriages by type of marriage – 2024.....	4
Figure 5: Percentage of marriages by age of bride and groom – 2024.....	4
Figure 6: Percent distribution of marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage – 2024.....	7
Figure 7: Marriages by previous marital status – 2024.....	8
Figure 8: First marriages and re-marriages – 2024.....	8
Figure 9: Crude Marriage Rate 2015-2024.....	9

TRENDS IN MARRIAGE

2021.

7,631

MARRIAGES

2022.

5,642

MARRIAGES

2023.

4,789

MARRIAGES

2024.

4,517

MARRIAGES

1.0 Introduction

According to the Marriage Act of 2001, marriage is a statutory union on which data is collected for both legal and statistical purposes. Marriage statistics offer valuable insights into the formation of family units.

In Botswana, marriage is a legally recognized union between two individuals of the opposite sex, both of whom must be at least 18 years of age. The process begins with the publication of the couple's intention to marry and deciding on the place of marriage solemnization. Civil marriages are typically officiated by a District Commissioner (DC) or a marriage officer appointed by the DC, while customary marriages may be presided over by a chief.

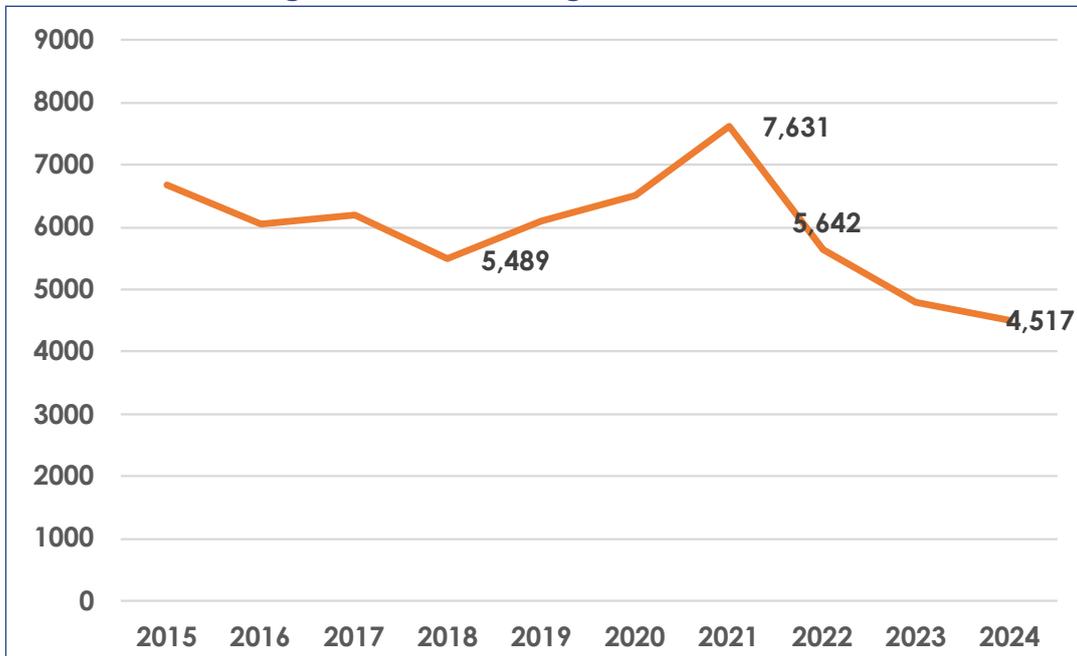
Marriage statistics provide information on demographic characteristics such as age, sex, and usual residence, month of marriage and marital status at time of marriage. Analyzing these demographic variables help identify trends, seasonality of events, among others. Observing trends over the years shows that changes in these statistics are minimal, highlighting gradual changes in the age at which people seek to marry for the first time.

2.0 Findings

2.1 Trends in Marriage (2015-2024)

Figure 1 indicates a downward trend in the number of registered marriages over the last ten years. Following a high of 7,631 in 2021, the number of marriages consistently fell to 4,517 in 2024, marking the lowest point of the decade. This decline equates to a 41% drop from the figures recorded in 2021.

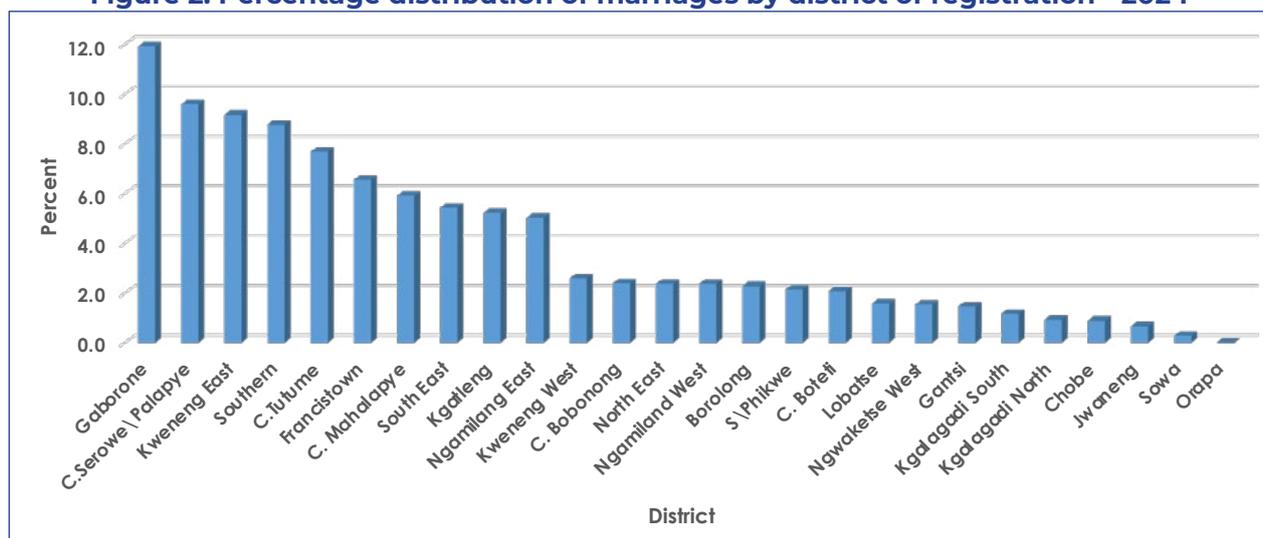
Figure 1: Crude Marriage Rate 2015-2024



2.2 District of Registration

Figure 2 shows that Gaborone had the highest proportion of registered marriages in 2024, accounting for 11.9 percent of all unions. This was followed by Central Serowe/Palapye (9.6%), Kweneng East (9.2%), and Southern (8.8%) districts. Districts such as Sowa (0.3%), Jwaneng (0.7%), and Chobe (0.9%) registered the lowest proportions. This is however expected, as the percentages align closely with the sizes of the respective populations.

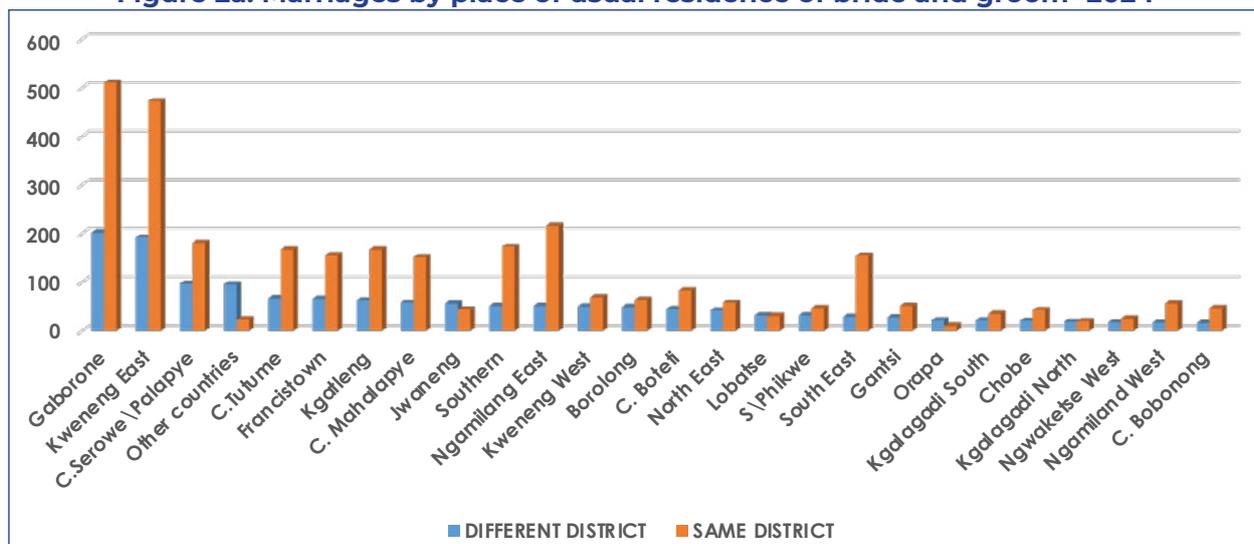
Figure 2: Percentage distribution of marriages by district of registration - 2024



2.3 District of usual residence of bride and groom – 2024

Figure 2a illustrates that the majority of marriages were contracted between partners residing within the same district. Gaborone recorded the highest number of such marriages at 511, followed by Kweneng East with 473, and Ngamiland East with 217. Notably, 32.1 percent of all marriages involved partners from different districts. Among these, Gaborone registered the highest number at 202, followed closely by Kweneng East with 192 inter-district marriages.

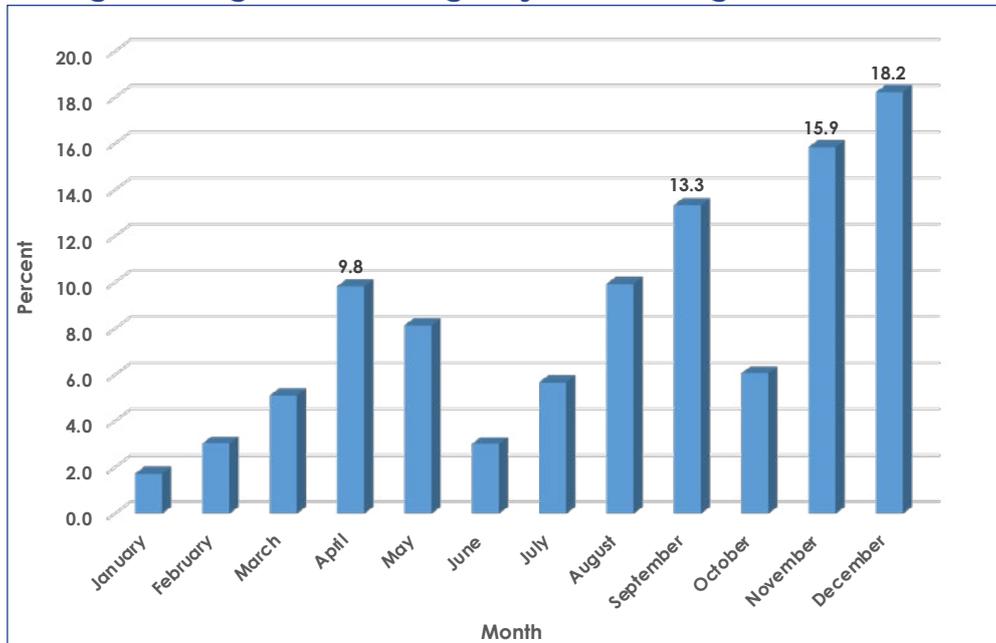
Figure 2a: Marriages by place of usual residence of bride and groom -2024



2.4 Month of Registration

According to **Figure 3** the highest percentages of marriages occurred in December (18.2%), November (15.9%), and September (13.3%). Conversely, the lowest proportions were recorded in January (1.7%), February (3.0%), and June (3.0%).

Figure 3: Registered marriages by month of registration – 2024

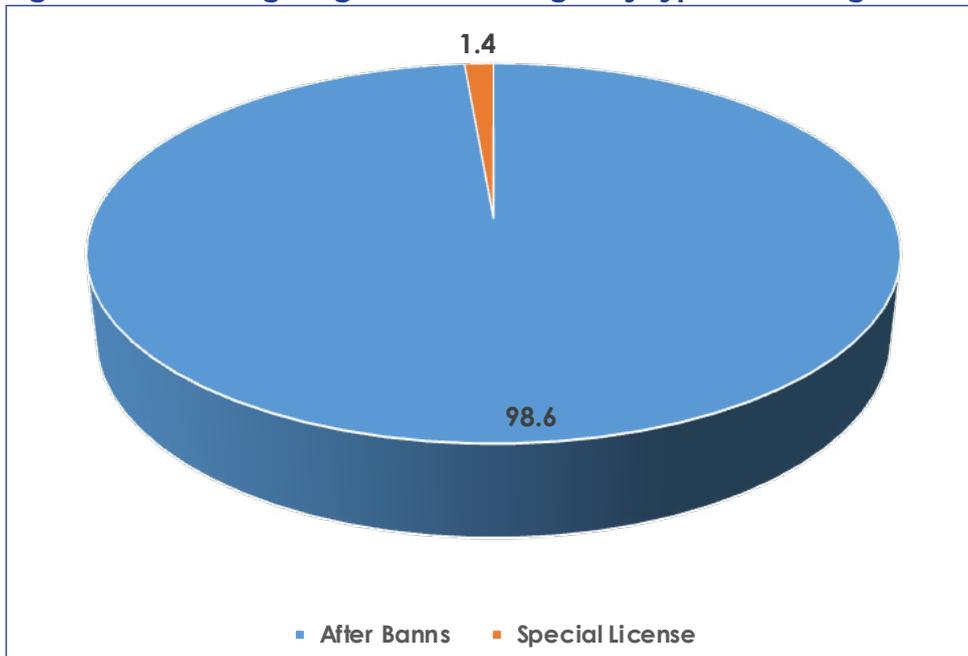


2.5 Type of Marriage

In accordance with marriage legislation, individuals intending to marry are required to make a public declaration—known as the publishing of banns—which must be accessible to the public for a minimum period of three weeks prior to the solemnisation of the marriage. Alternatively, couples may apply for a special license, which allows them to marry without the waiting period or the need for public notice, upon payment of a nominal fee.

Figure 4 shows that the vast majority of marriages in 2024 (98.6%) were conducted following the publication of banns, while only 1.4% were solemnised through the issuance of a special license. This trend indicates that most couples adhered to the traditional and legally prescribed procedure of public notice prior to marriage.

Figure 4: Percentage registered marriages by type of marriage – 2024



2.6 Age at the time of marriage

According to **Figure 5**, most marriages occurred between the ages of 30 and 39. The highest percentage of marriages was observed in the age group 30 to 34 (23.4%) and 35 to 39 (19.4%) for brides and grooms respectively. Out of the 4 517 marriages, 1 groom and 5 brides were aged below 20 years. The figure further shows that women marry younger than men, as seen by the decline in the number of marriages for brides as age goes beyond 40 years.

Figure 5: Percentage of marriages by age of bride and groom – 2024

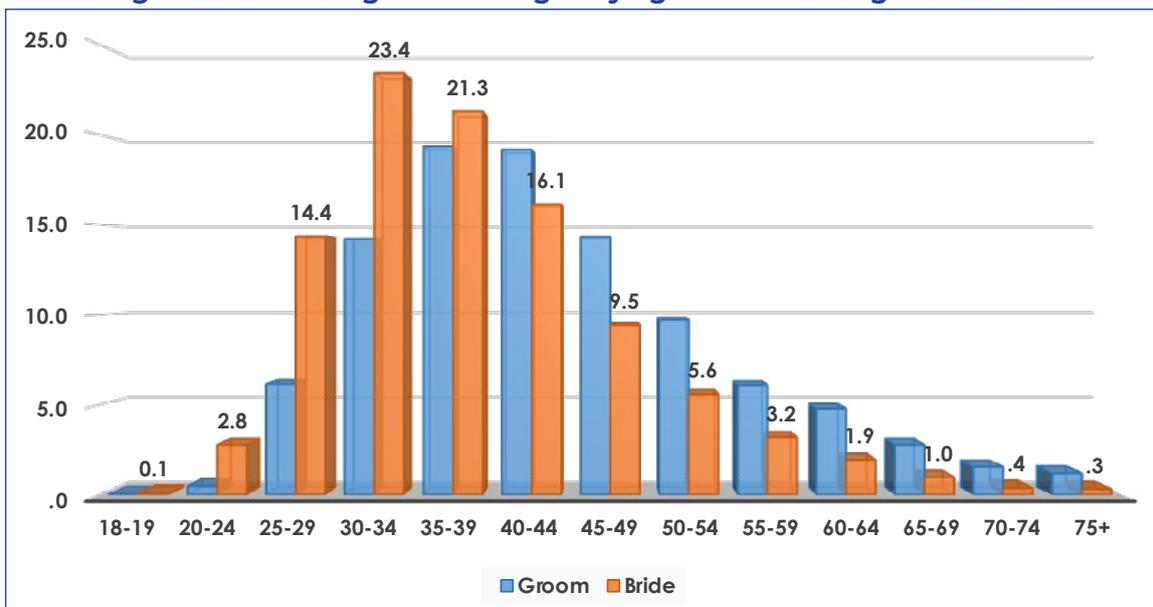


Table 1.1 shows the percentage of brides' and groom's age at time of marriage. The table clearly shows that women marry earlier in life than men. About 3.0 percent of brides were aged 18-24 years compared to 0.5 percent of grooms. On the other hand, almost 25% of grooms were aged 50 and more, compared to 12.4% of brides, indicating that men typically marry later in life

The largest proportion of brides fell between the ages of 30 and 39, representing 44.7 percent of all marriages. Conversely, grooms showed a higher percentage in the 35-44 age range, constituting 38.6 percent of all marriages.

Table 1.1: Percent marriages by age of husband and wife at marriage - 2024

Age	Male	Percent	Female	Percent
18	-	0.0	1	0.0
19	1	0.0	4	0.1
18-19	1	0.0	5	0.1
20	-	0.0	1	0.0
21	1	0.0	12	0.3
22	-	0.0	26	0.6
23	9	0.2	42	0.9
24	12	0.3	45	1.0
20-24	22	0.5	126	2.8
25	12	0.3	94	2.1
26	28	0.6	99	2.2
27	49	1.1	132	2.9
28	75	1.7	125	2.8
29	115	2.5	199	4.4
25-29	279	6.2	649	14.4
30	105	2.3	193	4.3
31	117	2.6	234	5.2
32	134	3.0	194	4.3
33	129	2.9	233	5.2
34	158	3.5	205	4.5
30-34	643	14.2	1,059	23.4
35	148	3.3	213	4.7
36	185	4.1	184	4.1
37	179	4.0	185	4.1
38	169	3.7	204	4.5
39	194	4.3	176	3.9
35-39	875	19.4	962	21.3
40	185	4.1	154	3.4
41	176	3.9	163	3.6
42	180	4.0	156	3.5
43	167	3.7	137	3.0
44	159	3.5	119	2.6
40-44	867	19.2	729	16.1

Table 1.1 Continued: Percent marriages by age of husband and wife at marriage - 2024

	Male	Percent	Female	Percent
Age				
45	146	3.2	101	2.2
46	158	3.5	101	2.2
47	112	2.5	64	1.4
48	113	2.5	75	1.7
49	119	2.6	86	1.9
45-49	648	14.3	427	9.5
50	118	2.6	52	1.2
51	89	2.0	58	1.3
52	80	1.8	47	1.0
53	76	1.7	41	.9
54	76	1.7	54	1.2
50-54	439	9.7	252	5.6
55	64	1.4	34	0.8
56	65	1.4	35	0.8
57	54	1.2	21	0.5
58	47	1.0	25	0.6
59	46	1.0	29	0.6
55-59	276	6.1	144	3.2
60	66	1.5	16	0.4
61	38	0.8	18	0.4
62	35	0.8	22	0.5
63	30	0.7	17	0.4
64	47	1.0	15	0.3
60-64	216	4.8	88	1.9
65+	251	5.6	76	1.7
Total	4,517	100.0	4,517	100.0

Table 1.2 shows that the mean age at first marriage was 43 years for bachelors and 38 years for spinsters. The mean age for bachelors increased by 1 year from 42 years in 2023, while the mean age for spinsters remained the same at 38 during the same period.

The median age at first marriage has been constant at 41 and 36 for bachelors and spinsters respectively since 2022. This is an indication that marriages are overly delayed with men consistently marrying later than women.

Table 1.2: Mean and median age at first marriage 2019- 2024

	Mean		Median	
	Bachelor	Spinster	Bachelor	Spinster
Year				
2024	44	38	42	37
2023	42	38	41	36
2022	43	38	41	36
2021	42	37	40	35
2020	42	36	40	35
2019	40	35	38	34

2.7 Age differentials

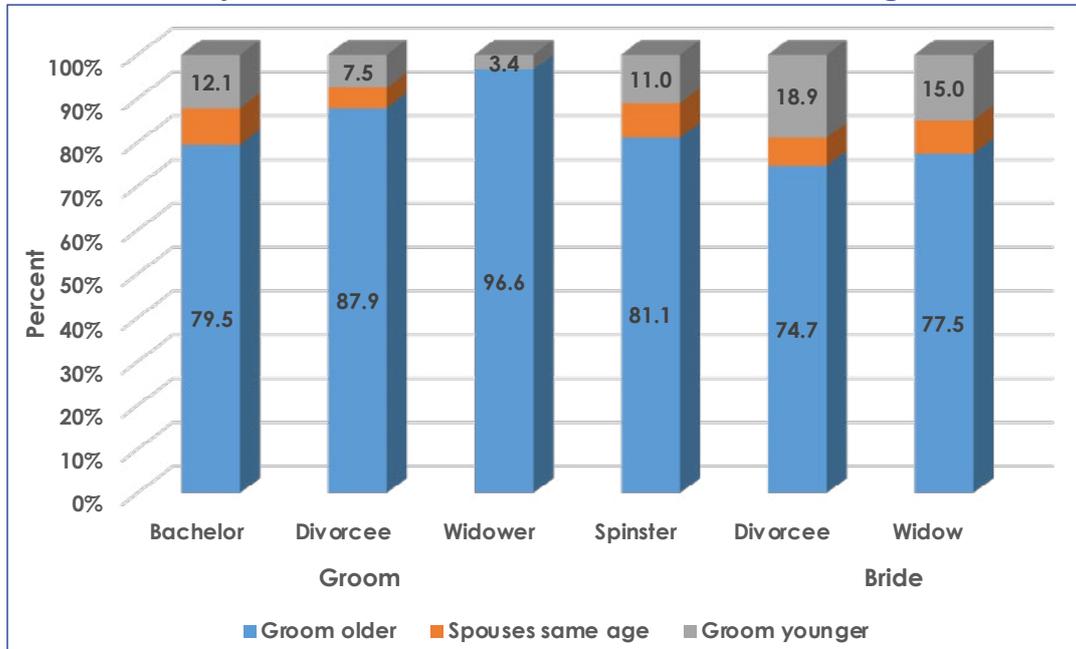
Table 1.3 shows that in about 80 percent of marriages, the groom was older than the bride, with 22.5 percent of grooms 10 or more years older than their brides. On the other hand brides who were older than their grooms accounted for 11.3 percent with only 0.4 percent of the brides 10 or more years older than their grooms. About 8.0 percent of couples were of the same age

Table 1.3 Age differences between partners - 2024

	Age Difference	No. of Unions	Percent
Groom younger than Bride	1-4	390	8.6
	5-9	106	2.3
	10-14	14	0.3
	15+	6	0.1
Same Age	0	354	7.8
Groom older than Bride	1-4	1404	31.1
	5-9	1228	27.2
	10-14	618	13.7
	15-19	247	5.5
	20+	150	3.3
Total		4,517	100.0

Figure 6 shows that in 2024, most men who got married were older than their women irrespective of their marital status at marriage. On the contrary women who were previously married tend to marry younger men with 11.0 percent of spinsters marrying younger men compared to 18.9 and 15.0 percent of divorcees and widowed women respectively.

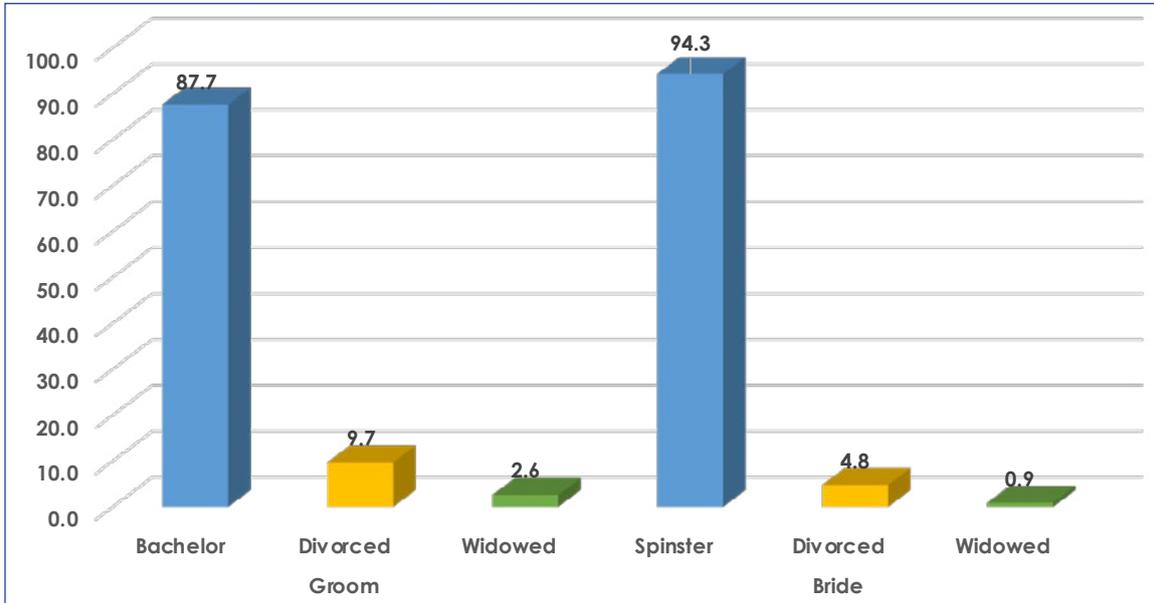
Figure 6: Percent distribution of marriages by age differences between spouses and marital status at the time of marriage – 2024



2.8 Previous Marital Status

Figure 7 shows that the majority of grooms were bachelors (87.7%), while the smaller percentages were divorcees (9.7%) or widowers (2.6%). Similarly with bride's, the majority were spinsters (94.3%), while divorcees (4.8%) and widows (0.9%) made up a much smaller proportion.

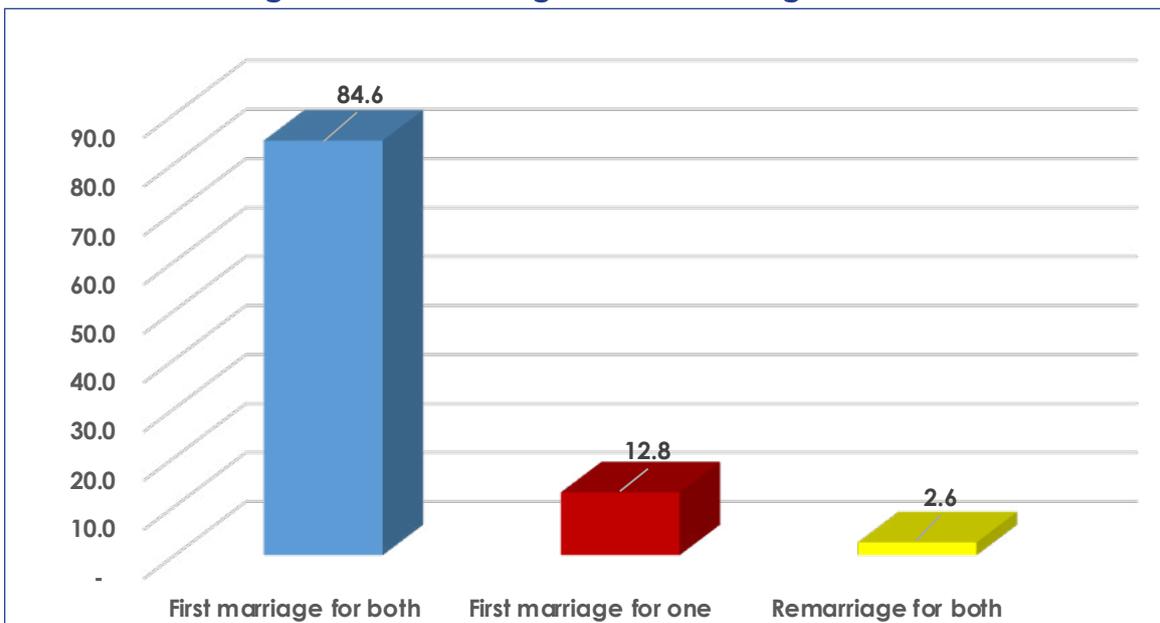
Figure 7: Marriages by previous marital status – 2024



2.9 First Marriages and Re-marriages

Figure 8 shows that most marriages that accounted for 84.6 percent in 2024 involved couples both marrying for the first time. About 12.8 percent of marriages had one partner remarrying, while only 2.6 percent were remarriages for both spouses.

Figure 8: First marriages and re-marriages – 2024



2.10 Crude Marriage Rate (CMR)

The Crude Marriage Rate (CMR) is a demographic indicator that reflects the number of marriages occurring per 1,000 individuals in a given year. As illustrated in **Figure 9**, the CMR has shown a steady decline, decreasing from approximately 3.0 marriages per 1,000 population in 2021 to 1.8 in 2024. This downward trend suggests a gradual reduction in marriage frequency over the observed period.

Figure 9: Crude Marriage Rate 2015-2024

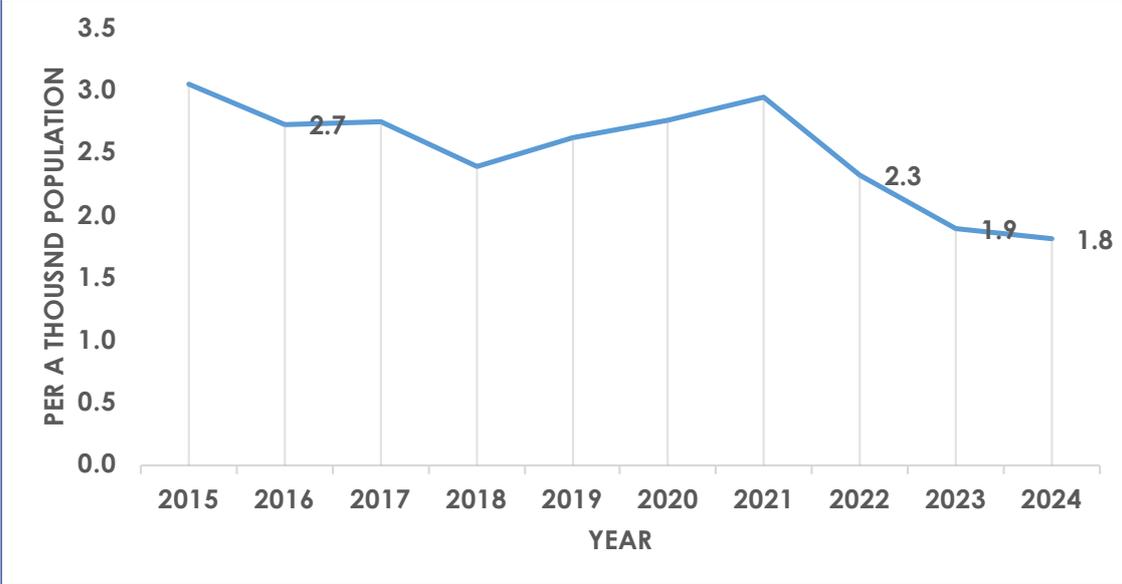


Table M1: A Summary of Marriages-2015-2024

Year of marriage	2,015	2,016	2,107	2,018	2,019	2,020	2,021	2,022	2,023	2,024
Total marriages	6,677	6,051	6,203	5,489	6,097	6,518	7,631	5,642	4,789	4,517
Quarterly Totals										
Jan-March	603	608	1,042	652	597	652	1,053	640	588	446
Apr-June	1,292	1,186	1,229	1,094	1,299	600	1,843	1,269	974	948
July-Sept	2,216	1,560	1,919	1,568	1,774	1,942	1,514	1,467	1,334	1,309
Oct-Dec	2,566	2,697	2,013	2,175	2,427	3,324	3,221	2,266	1,893	1,814
Total	6,677	6,051	6,203	5,489	6,097	6,518	7,631	5,642	4,789	4,517
Previous Marital Status										
Males										
Bachelor	6,008	5,496	5,802	4,958	5,461	5,963	7,007	5,231	4,290	3,961
Divorced	482	395	299	428	493	425	495	329	396	439
Widowed	187	160	102	103	143	130	129	82	103	117
Total	6,677	6,051	6,203	5,489	6,097	6,518	7,631	5,642	4,789	4,517
Females										
Spinster	6,421	5,822	6,053	5,260	5,856	6,307	7,405	5,470	4,569	4,260
Divorced	186	173	114	183	191	170	184	147	170	217
Widowed	70	56	36	46	50	41	42	25	42	40
Total	6,677	6,051	6,203	5,489	6,097	6,518	7,631	5,642	4,781	4,517
Previous Marital Status										
First marriage for both	5,868	5,363	5,679	4,836	5,317	5,839	6,891	5,119	4,159	3,821
First marriage for one	693	592	497	546	683	592	630	463	541	579
Remarriage for both	116	96	27	107	97	87	110	60	89	117
Total	6,677	6,051	6,203	5,489	6,097	6,518	7,631	5,642	4,789	4,517
Type of marriage										
After Banns	6,546	5,969	6,190	5,454	6,026	6,482	7,610	5,616	4,761	4,455
Special License	131	82	13	35	71	36	21	26	28	62
Total	6,677	6,051	6,203	5,489	6,097	6,518	7,631	5,642	4,789	4,517

Table M2: Age in combination at marriage time-2024

	Bride's Age															Total
	18	19	20	21-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75+	
Groom's Age																
19	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
21-24	-	1	-	13	7	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
25-29	1	2	-	46	177	43	9	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	279
30-34	-	1	-	34	227	329	39	12	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	643
35-39	-	-	1	14	133	376	291	47	9	3	1	-	-	-	-	875
40-44	-	-	-	13	66	202	319	221	39	6	1	-	-	-	-	867
45-49	-	-	-	4	18	69	174	241	114	23	4	1	-	-	-	648
50-54	-	-	-	-	15	24	70	117	131	67	10	4	1	-	-	439
55-59	-	-	-	-	5	10	36	58	68	70	22	4	3	-	-	276
60-64	-	-	-	-	-	4	16	23	45	46	52	25	5	-	-	216
65-69	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	9	16	21	32	27	12	2	-	126
70-74	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	3	11	18	17	10	6	2	70
75+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	4	9	13	9	13	55
Total	1	4	1	125	649	1,059	962	729	427	252	144	88	44	17	15	4,517

Table M3: Age at the time of marriage by previous marital status and sex-2024

Age group	Groom's Marital Status				Bride's Marital Status			
	Bachelor	Divorce	Widower	Total	Divorce	Spinster	Widow	Total
18-19	1	-	-	1	-	6	-	6
20-24	22	-	-	22	-	125	-	125
25-29	278	1	-	279	2	647	-	649
30-34	633	10	-	643	23	1,034	2	1,059
35-39	842	29	4	875	44	915	3	962
40-44	800	65	2	867	52	668	9	729
45-49	544	93	11	648	40	377	10	427
50-54	332	85	22	439	32	215	5	252
55-59	189	67	20	276	14	126	4	144
60-64	140	53	23	216	7	76	5	88
65-69	85	23	18	126	2	42	-	44
70-74	50	11	9	70	1	15	1	17
75+	45	2	8	55	-	14	1	15
Total	3,961	439	117	4,517	217	4,260	40	4,517
Percent	88	10	3	100	5	94	1	100

Table M4: Distribution of groom's by district of residence at the time of marriage and age -2024

	Groom's Male Group													Total
	18-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75+	
Usual Residence														
Gaborone	-	6	68	146	165	124	88	63	31	11	6	1	4	713
Francistown	-	1	11	48	46	41	35	14	14	7	4	1	-	222
Lobatse	-	1	2	3	16	17	12	7	3	1	-	-	1	63
S\Phikwe	-	-	3	11	16	13	12	10	6	4	2	1	1	79
Orapa	-	-	1	6	7	8	6	4	1	-	-	-	-	33
Jwaneng	-	-	7	17	22	24	18	10	2	-	-	-	-	100
Sowa	-	-	-	2	8	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	14
Southern	-	-	6	20	19	39	32	23	21	25	20	10	9	224
Borolong	-	-	4	6	17	26	13	15	10	10	8	-	4	113
Ngwaketse West	-	-	-	4	6	8	3	4	8	3	4	1	3	44
South East	-	-	20	27	38	33	25	19	12	6	4	-	-	184
Kweneng East	-	3	63	100	130	129	87	64	36	26	21	6	-	665
Kweneng West	-	-	5	17	18	22	17	15	8	5	3	7	2	119
Kgatleng	1	-	9	36	38	48	35	17	18	17	4	3	4	230
C.Serowe\Palapye	-	3	15	44	51	50	43	21	20	15	6	9	1	278
C. Mahalapye	-	1	11	9	33	33	33	30	14	21	8	9	8	210
C. Bobonong	-	1	3	4	13	12	13	5	5	2	2	1	2	63
C. Boteti	-	-	6	16	34	32	19	12	3	5	-	-	2	129
C.Tutume	-	1	8	15	44	48	34	24	20	21	13	4	2	234
North East	-	1	4	13	18	14	16	11	4	10	4	4	1	100
Ngamilang East	-	1	12	33	59	61	37	24	19	10	6	4	2	268
Ngamiland West	-	-	1	4	14	20	13	10	5	3	-	2	1	73
Chobe	-	-	4	9	16	10	12	6	4	2	1	-	-	64
Gantsi	-	2	4	18	11	11	11	6	3	6	3	3	1	79
Kgalagadi South	-	-	1	3	8	18	14	5	4	-	2	2	-	57
Kgalagadi North	-	-	-	3	4	7	10	3	-	5	1	1	5	39
Other countries	-	1	11	29	24	18	9	15	5	1	4	1	2	120
Total	1	22	279	643	875	867	648	439	276	216	126	70	55	4,517

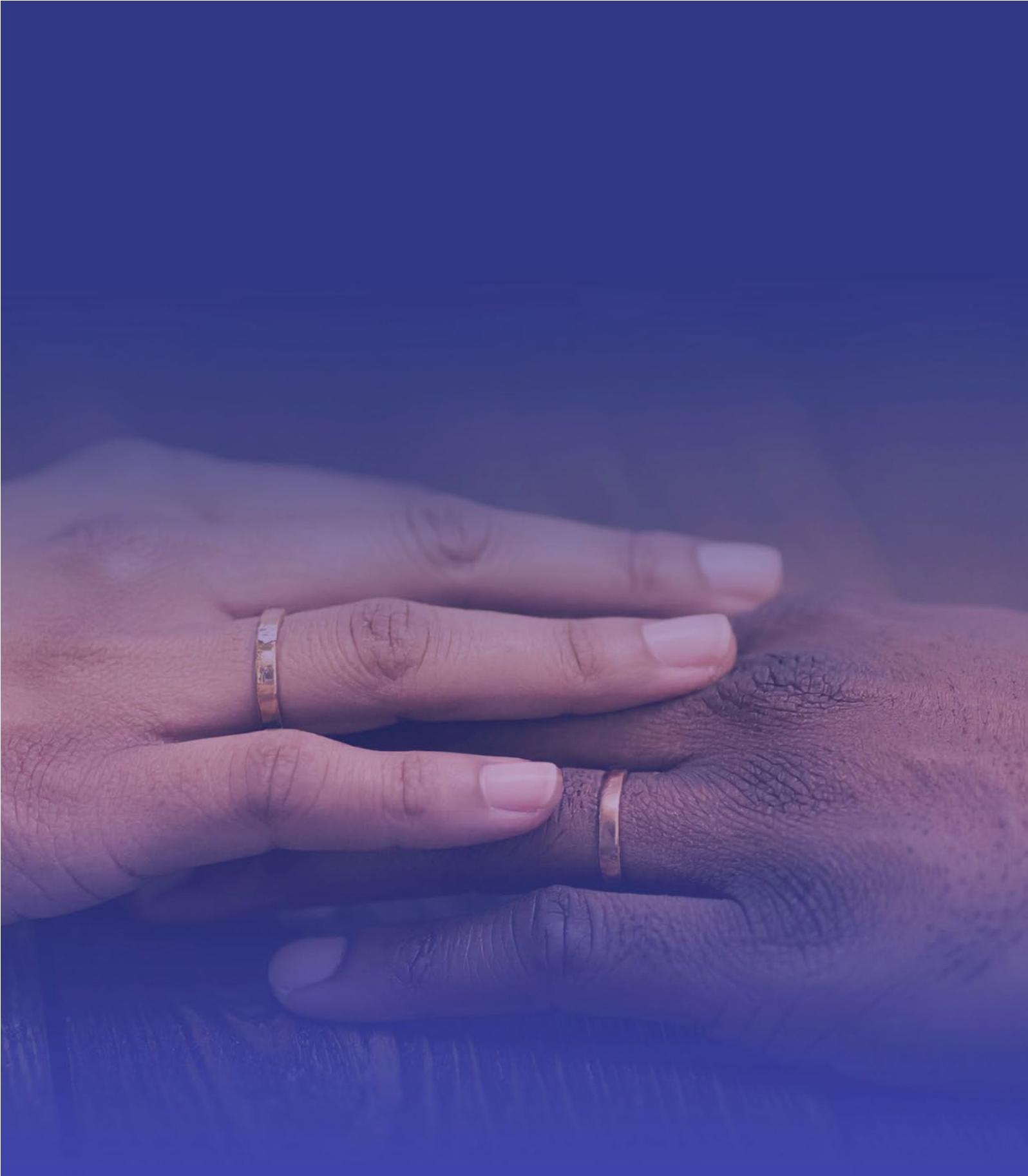
Table M5: Distribution of bride's by district of residence at the time of marriage and age -2024

	Groom's Male Group													Total
	18-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75+	
Usual Residence														
Gaborone	-	26	152	200	152	104	41	28	10	5	2	1	-	721
Francistown	-	10	42	68	57	39	21	11	2	1	1	-	-	252
Lobatse	-	1	4	12	16	13	3	4	3	2	-	-	-	58
S\Phikwe	-	1	7	16	16	14	8	3	2	2	-	-	1	70
Orapa	-	-	3	5	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
Jwaneng	-	-	12	12	20	13	2	4	1	-	-	-	-	64
Sowa	-	-	2	2	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
Southern	-	5	33	44	48	37	34	23	18	13	8	5	5	273
Borolong	-	2	3	27	21	16	14	3	4	2	-	1	3	96
Ngwaketse West	-	-	1	8	8	4	5	5	4	5	-	-	1	41
South East	-	10	45	70	61	25	23	21	6	2	1	-	-	264
Kweneng East	1	26	104	155	136	109	58	34	21	9	3	-	-	656
Kweneng West	-	3	5	14	20	18	10	9	4	4	3	1	-	91
Kgatleng	1	8	28	62	45	43	24	15	6	2	5	2	1	242
C.Serowe\Palapye	-	4	35	66	61	39	32	14	8	10	2	-	-	271
C. Mahalapye	-	8	25	44	37	50	29	19	14	9	3	3	4	245
C. Bobonong	-	2	11	19	16	9	10	6	1	1	1	1	-	77
C. Boteti	-	1	22	24	30	22	10	1	2	2	1	1	-	116
C.Tutume	2	6	30	50	47	42	24	19	10	6	4	-	-	240
North East	-	3	11	16	20	25	6	5	5	3	2	1	-	97
Ngamilang East	-	3	29	74	68	51	21	14	7	4	2	-	-	273
Ngamiland West	-	-	6	14	23	14	14	2	4	-	-	-	-	77
Chobe	-	2	5	14	15	8	5	1	1	2	-	-	-	53
Gantsi	1	3	9	15	6	10	9	7	2	1	3	-	-	66
Kgalagadi South	-	-	6	10	13	11	8	2	3	2	3	-	-	58
Kgalagadi North	-	-	5	7	9	6	7	1	4	1	-	1	-	41
Other countries	-	2	14	11	13	5	5	1	2	-	-	-	-	53
Total	5	126	649	1,059	962	729	427	252	144	88	44	17	15	4,517

Table M6: Previous marital status of person marrying-2016-2024

Year of Marriage	Grooms Marital Status	Bride's Marital Status							
		Total	Percent	Spinster	Percent	Divorced	Percent	Widowed	Percent
2016	Bachelor	5,496	90.8	5,363	92.1	97	56.1	36	64.3
	Divorced	395	6.5	322	5.5	62	35.8	11	19.6
	Widowed	160	2.6	137	2.4	14	8.1	9	16.1
	Total	6,051	100.0	5,822	100	173	100	56	100
2017	Bachelor	5,802	93.5	5,679	93.8	90	78.9	33	91.7
	Divorced	299	4.8	279	4.6	18	15.8	2	5.6
	Widowed	102	1.6	95	1.6	6	5.3	1	2.8
	Total	6,203	100.0	6,053	100.0	114	100.0	36	100.0
2018	Bachelor	4,958	90.3	4,836	91.9	93	50.8	29	63.0
	Divorced	428	7.8	349	6.6	69	37.7	10	21.7
	Widowed	103	1.9	75	1.4	21	11.5	7	15.2
	Total	5,489	100.0	5,260	100.0	183	100.0	46	100.0
2019	Bachelor	5,461	89.6	5,317	90.8	114	59.7	30	60.0
	Divorced	493	8.1	415	7.1	65	34.0	13	26.0
	Widowed	143	2.3	124	2.1	12	6.3	7	14.0
	Total	6,097	100.0	5,856	100.0	191	100.0	50	100.0
2020	Bachelor	5,963	91.5	5,839	92.6	96	56.5	28	68.3
	Divorced	425	6.5	358	5.7	61	35.9	6	14.6
	Widowed	130	2.0	110	1.7	13	7.6	7	17.1
	Total	6,518	100.0	6,307	100.0	170	100.0	41	100.0
2021	Bachelor	7,007	91.8	6,891	93.1	98	53.3	18	42.9
	Divorced	495	6.5	404	5.5	73	39.7	18	42.9
	Widowed	129	1.7	110	1.5	13	7.1	6	14.3
	Total	7,631	100.0	7,405	100.0	184	100.0	42	100.0
2022	Bachelor	5,231	92.7	5,119	93.6	96	65.3	16	64.0
	Divorced	329	5.8	277	5.1	46	31.3	6	24.0
	Widowed	82	1.5	74	1.4	5	3.4	3	12.0
	Total	5,642	100.0	5,470	100.0	147	100.0	25	100.0
2023	Bachelor	4290	89.6	4159	91.0	106	59.6	25	59.5
	Divorced	396	8.3	327	7.2	58	32.6	11	26.2
	Widowed	103	2.2	83	1.8	14	7.9	6	14.3
	Total	4789	100.0	4569	100.0	178	100.0	42	100.0
2024	Bachelor	3,961	87.7	3,821	84.6	114	52.5	26	52.5
	Divorced	439	9.7	342	7.6	88	40.6	9	40.6
	Widowed	117	2.6	97	2.1	15	6.9	5	6.9
	Total	4,517	100.0	4,260	100.0	217	100.0	40	100.0





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