

On average marriage rates in the Asia/Pacific region are 50% higher than the average across OECD countries (Figure 4.6, Panel A), and there is considerable variation in both marriage and divorce rates across the Asia/Pacific region. Crude marriage rates are highest at over ten marriages per 1 000 adults in the Maldives, Bangladesh, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, while the marriage rate is less than half of this in Samoa, New Zealand and Mongolia. The crude divorce rate in the Maldives is also three times higher than the average of the Asia/Pacific economies. Divorce rates are low relative to high marriage rates in Indonesia, Tajikistan and Viet Nam.

OECD (2014) shows that marriage rates declined and divorce rates decreased in the Asia/Pacific OECD countries: over the 1970-2010 period marriage rates showed a steady decline while divorce rates doubled in Australia, Japan and New Zealand and more than quintupled in Korea, albeit from a very low base (0.4 divorces per 1 000 people).

There are large gender differences in the age at marriage between men and women in the Asia/Pacific region (Figure 4.7). Men are around age 25 to 30 when they get married across the region, while men in wealthier countries often remain bachelors well into their thirties. Women generally get married at an earlier age, and on average women marry earliest in Bangladesh, Nepal and India.

More so than across the OECD, marriage remains the norm across the Asia/Pacific region as it concerns two-thirds of the adult population on average (Figure 4.8). On average, almost four out of five adults are married across China, while this is just over half in Hong Kong (China). Almost four out of ten adults in Korea and Malaysia are single or have not been married. Divorcees and widows make up only a small part of the adult population.

Further reading

OECD (2014), *OECD Family Database*, OECD, Paris, www.oecd.org/social/family/database.

Shin Y., J. Yoo, H. Kim, J. Yoon (2013), "Comparative Study of Family Policy in East Asia, Korea, China, Japan, Singapore", OECD Korea Policy Centre/Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, Seoul, www.oecdkorea.org/user/nd12191.do?itemShCd1=44.

Figure note

Figure 4.6. Dates referring to marriage data and those for divorce rates may differ. Panel B: No data on crude divorce rates are available for Bangladesh, Fiji and Philippines.

Definition and measurement

The crude marriage rate is the number of marriages formed each year as a ratio to 1 000 adults; similarly, the crude divorce rate is the number of marriages dissolved in a given year as related to the total adult population. The data were taken from the 2012 *Demographic Yearbook* of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/2000_round.htm). For various countries the latest available data concern the early- or mid-2000s: Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, Indonesia, Philippines, Samoa, Thailand and Tonga.

The singulate mean age at marriage is an estimate of the average number of years lived in the single state among those who marry before age 50 (Figure 4.7). These data were taken from the World Marriage data 2012 of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' Population Division (www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/dataset/marriage/wmd2012/MainFrame.html).

Data on partner status are drawn from the Gallup World Poll. The Gallup World Poll is conducted in more than 150 countries around the world based on a common questionnaire, translated into the predominant languages of each country. With few exceptions, all samples are probability based and nationally representative of the resident population aged 15 years and over in the entire country, including rural areas. While this ensures a high degree of comparability across countries, results may be affected by sampling and non-sampling error, and variation in response rates. Hence, results should be interpreted with care. These probability surveys are valid within a statistical margin of error, also called a 95% confidence interval. This means that if the survey is conducted 100 times using the exact same procedures, the margin of error would include the "true value" in 95 out of 100 surveys. Sample sizes vary across countries from 1 000 to 4 000, and as the surveys use a clustered sample design the margin of error varies by question. The margin of error declines with increasing sample size: with a sample size of 1 000, the margin of error at a 95% confidence interval is $0.98/\sqrt{\text{sample size}}$ or 3%, with a sample size of 4 000, this is 1.5%. The data underlying Figure 4.8 are based on answers from survey respondents aged 15 years to the following question: "What is your current marital status?" The categories were self-assessed by the respondent (Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.6. **Marriage and divorce rates**

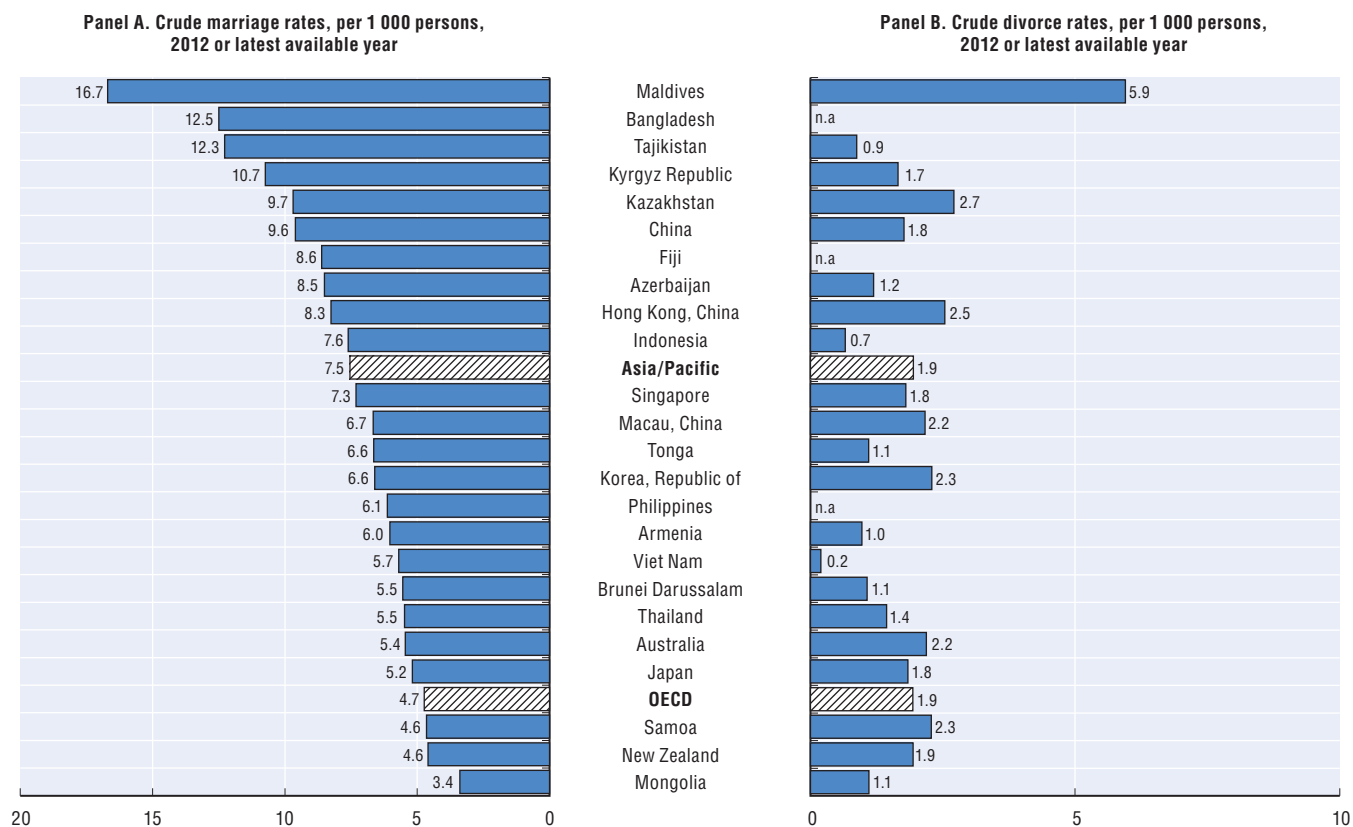


Figure 4.7. **Singulate mean age at marriage by gender**
Estimate of the average number of years lived in the single state among those who marry before age 50

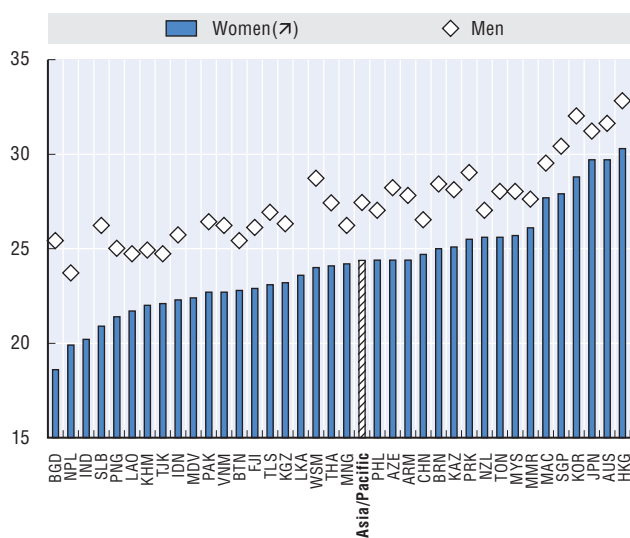
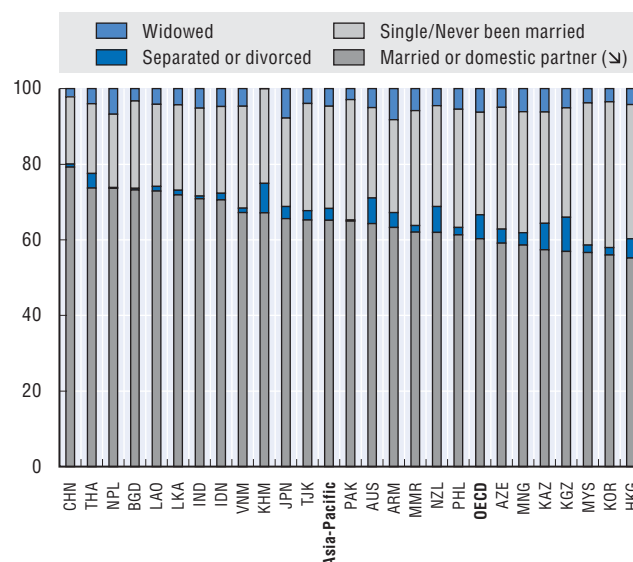
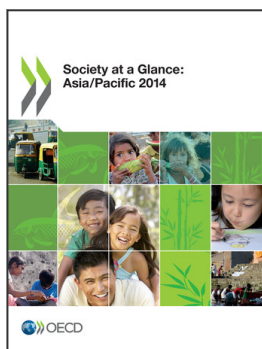


Figure 4.8. **Marital status in selected Asia-Pacific countries**
% of adult population



Source: Figure 4.6: UN Demographic Yearbook 2012, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2012.htm>; Figure 4.7: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Marriage Data 2012; Figure 4.8: Gallup World Pool.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933150996>



From:
Society at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2014

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264220553-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2014), "Marriage and divorce", in *Society at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2014*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/soc_aag-2014-9-en

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