

Marriage patterns in South Africa: Analysis of Census 1996-2011 Data

Marriage is the legalisation of formalization of the union or relationship existing between two people. Thus, making their relationship public, official, and permanent. It is an act that solemnises a couple implying that the couple has legal obligations and commitment to each other throughout their lives or until they decide to bring the relationship to an end (divorce) at their own obligations.

Marriage in the true words is usually early and universal in the sub-Saharan African context (Palamuleni, 2010). Also in line with South Africa context, marriage is said to be evolving and on the decrease. According to literature, the important of marriage in the institutionalisation of the family cannot be over emphasized (Kumchulesi, 2007). Specifically, Palamuleni (2010) in a study in South Africa observed that marriage “marks the beginning of socially sanctioned exposure to pregnancy and sets the course of subsequent childbearing” (Palamuleni, 2010). It is also said to be the foundation and part of the requirement of a healthy family. This is so having it in mind that a stable and healthy family has a positive socio-economic implication to an individual, all members of the family and the community at large, including its implication on fertility (Palamuleni, 2010; Magagula, 2009; Kumchulesi, 2007; Sabiti et al, 2007; Udjo, 2001).

With these contexts in mind, the need to understanding marriage pattern trajectories in terms of broad South African context cannot be over emphasized. Therefore, this study will focus on incidences of marriage pattern in South Africa in cross-sectional dispensations. In other words, using the census 1996-2011 data sets and controlling for rural-urban settings. It is envisaged that findings from this study will assist in understanding this phenomenon in the broad South African context. Thus, enable the government to design evidence based intervention strategies and policies aimed at improving the marriage institution in the country.

2. Study Objectives:

2.1 General Objectives:

The study is aimed at examining the levels and patterns of marriage in South Africa, using the census 1996-2011 data seta.

2.2. Specific Objectives:

- Examine the levels and patterns of marriage in post-Apartheid South Africa, 1996-2011.
- Investigate if the patterns of marriage observed in the rural area of South Africa are consistent in the urban area of South Africa.

3. Study Methods:

The Census 1996-2011 data will be used in the study. These are cross-sectional and data collected at different point in time by Stats SA, covering the entire country population. All data was collected *de facto* using similar methodology and questionnaire instruments with similar contents and result code. The study target population are all male and female age (15-49) with a marital status as at the time of data collection. Adopting a basic qualitative approach, analysis was carried out at bivariate levels using Basic Demographic Methods. Controls were done for rural-urban areas.

4. Study Limits:

The study dependent variable has a possible case of reporting bias issue especially as it has to do with married and divorce/separated responses. These are primarily due to cultural and stigma issues attached to both response outcomes.

5. Results:

Levels and Patterns of Marriage Status in South Africa, Census 1996-2011.

Table 1: Percentage Never Married (Male and Female) by Age group for South Africa 1966, 2001 and 2011.

	Male			Female		
	1996	2001	2011	1996	2001	2011
15 - 19	99.2	98.7	96.6	96.6	95.6	93.8
20 - 24	91.4	91.9	90.1	77.7	79.0	77.9
25 - 29	66.7	69.9	70.9	52.5	55.9	58.5
30 - 34	41.4	45.2	51.1	35.9	38.7	45.7
35 - 39	27.0	29.3	37.5	26.9	29.0	37.1
40 - 44	19.0	20.5	27.2	21.1	23.2	30.4
45 - 49	15.0	15.3	21.2	17.2	19.4	26.4
SA	60.0	61.8	63.6	53.9	55.2	57.7

Table 3: Percentage living together (Male & Female) by Age group for South Africa 1966, 2001 and 2011.

	Male			Female		
	1996	2001	2011	1996	2001	2011
15 - 19	0.3	0.3	1.0	1.2	2.1	2.8
20 - 24	2.8	3.9	4.5	6.2	9.5	10.8
25 - 29	7.6	11.9	12.5	8.5	13.5	16.1
30 - 34	9.0	14.8	17.0	7.8	12.3	15.6
35 - 39	8.2	13.9	17.3	6.6	10.6	13.5
40 - 44	7.2	11.8	15.4	5.3	8.5	10.9
45 - 49	6.4	10.2	13.5	4.2	6.8	9.0
SA	5.4	8.5	10.5	5.7	8.9	11.2

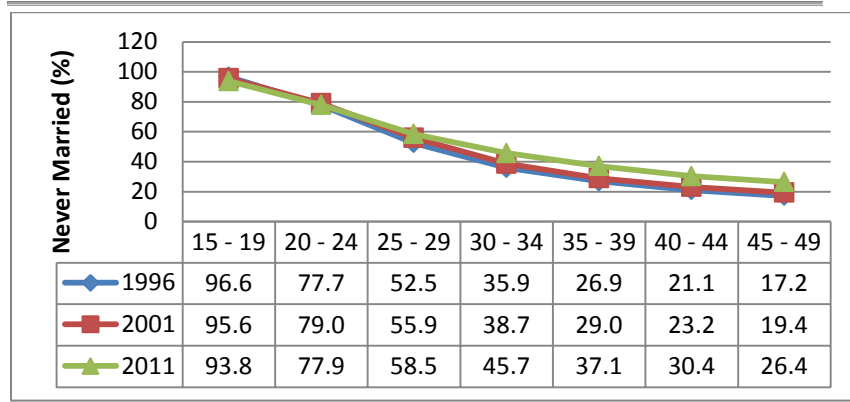
Table 2: Percentage Married (Male & Female) by Age group for South Africa 1966, 2001 and 2011.

	Male			Female		
	1996	2001	2011	1996	2001	2011
15 - 19	0.5	0.8	1.9	2.1	1.9	2.9
20 - 24	5.5	3.8	4.9	15.3	10.8	10.6
25 - 29	24.6	17.4	15.8	36.5	28.5	24.0
30 - 34	47.1	37.8	30.5	50.7	44.0	35.7
35 - 39	60.8	53.2	42.9	57.5	51.7	43.6
40 - 44	68.5	62.4	53.3	60.6	55.0	48.9
45 - 49	72.4	67.8	59.7	61.9	56.1	50.8
SA	32.5	27.6	24.1	35.2	30.6	27.2

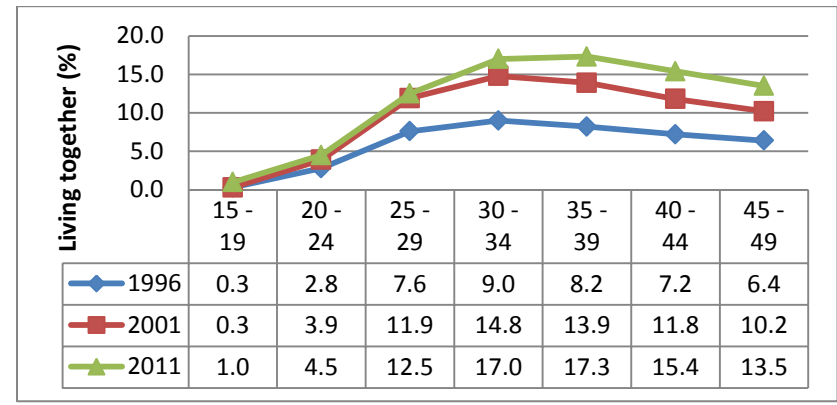
Table 4 Percentage Separated/Divorced (Male & Female) by Age group for South Africa 1966, 2001 and 2011.

	Male			Female		
	1996	2001	2011	1996	2001	2011
15 - 19	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.4
20 - 24	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.5
25 - 29	0.9	0.7	0.6	2.0	1.5	1.0
30 - 34	2.1	1.7	1.1	4.0	3.3	1.9
35 - 39	3.4	3.0	1.8	5.9	5.3	3.4
40 - 44	4.2	4.3	2.9	7.4	7.2	5.1
45 - 49	4.6	4.9	3.9	7.8	8.0	6.3
Total	1.7	1.6	1.3	3.2	3.0	2.2

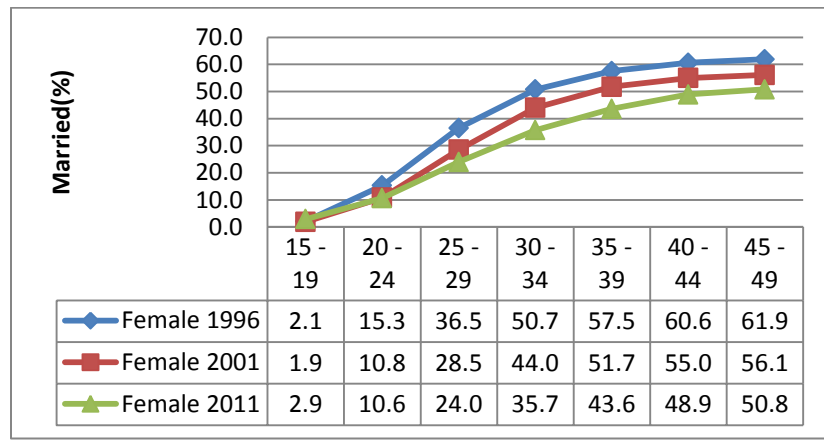
ii. Never married (Female)



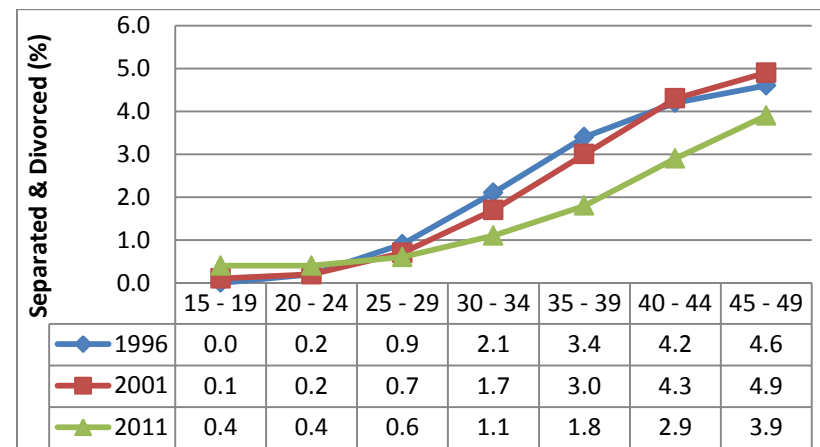
v. L/tgther (Male)



iv. Married (Female)



vii. Divorce/Separated (Male)



6. Brief Discussions:

Results show the pattern of marital status has been consistent over the years in South Africa. Also, controls for rural-urban areas revealed a similar pattern. Specifically, the proportion of married women decreased from 35.2% in 1996 to 27.2% in 2011, while proportion of those never married increased from 53.9% to 57.7% over the same period. Also, the proportion of divorced/separated men decreased from 1.7% in 1996 to 1.3% in 2011, while the proportion of those living together increased from 5.4% to 10.5% over the same period. A close observation indicates that the patterns of other marriage status in South African are not consistent with these levels.

Available literature in this area has associated these patterns to “social and economic conditions such as increasing education levels, employment of women, urbanisation and modernisation” (Palamuleni, 2010). It is envisaged that findings from this study will assist in understanding marriage incidents in the broad South African context. Thus, enable the government to design evidence based intervention strategies and policies aimed at addressing the declining levels in the country.

Reference:

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