



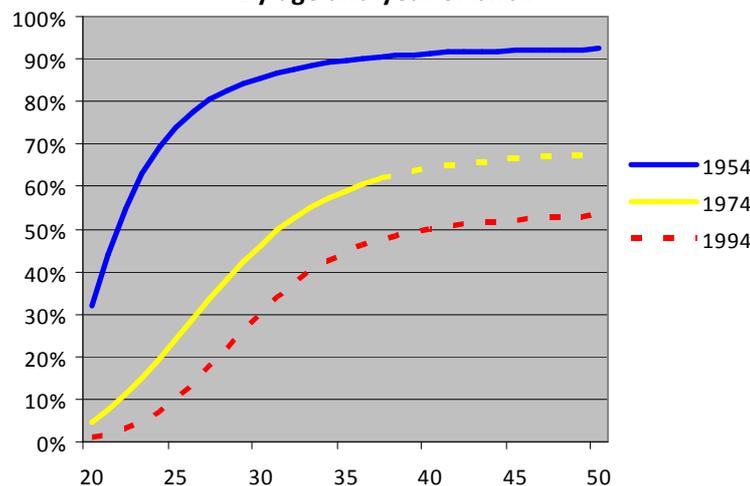
Who's still getting married these days?

Harry Benson, The Marriage Foundation

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- Marriage rates have been falling since 1970, the peak year for marriages. Across every age group, the proportion of men and women who have ever married is in decline.
- The most striking change is the virtual disappearance of marriage amongst those under 25. In terms of numbers, there are 90% fewer weddings today amongst those under 25 compared to 1970. In terms of proportions, just 5% of men and 10% of women aged 25 are married today, compared to 60% and 80% respectively in 1970.
- Leaving aside these early weddings, the proportion of men and women who marry after age 25 has remained relatively stable for men and even increased for women.
- However the net effect of the collapse in early marriage rates is a delayed reaction that is rippling through the age groups.
- For example, until as recently as 1994 for men and 2002 for women, it was the case that over 90% of 45 year olds either were or had been married. Today these proportions are still a relatively healthy 70% for men and 80% for women. They will decline further.
- Based on the latest marriage rates, 52% of today's 20 year old men and 53% of today's 20 year old women are predicted to marry.
- This shows the full extent of the trend away from marriage. Forty years ago, almost all twenty year olds would expect to marry – and did. Today, just half will do so.

WOMEN - proportion who marry
By age and year of birth



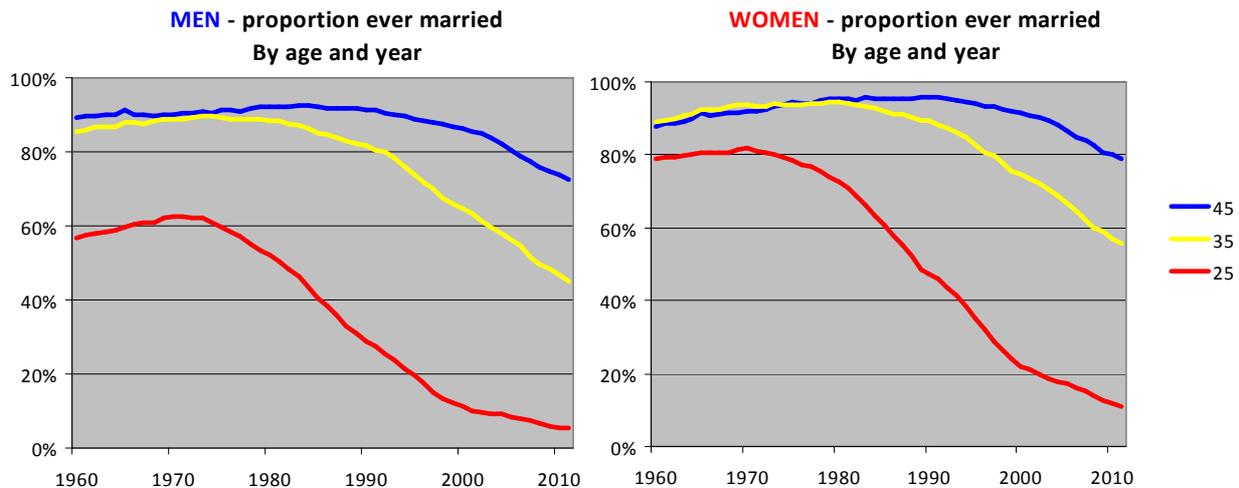
THE PROPORTION OF MEN & WOMEN WHO MARRY

How many of my age group have already got married?

Marriage rates are on their way down. Since their 1970 peak, the proportion of men and women who have ever married has fallen amongst every age group.

Most striking is the virtual disappearance of marriage amongst those under 25.

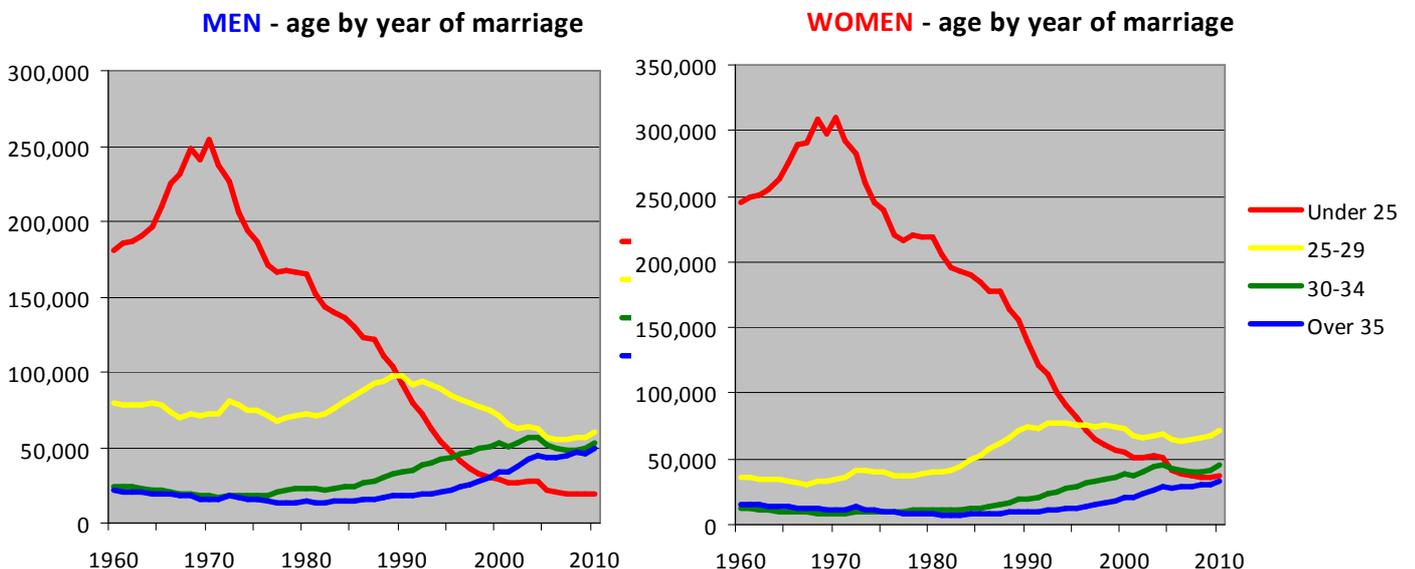
The first two charts below show how the extent of the collapse of marriage amongst younger men and women. Whereas in 1970, 60% of men and 80% of women were married by age 25, today only 5% of men and 10% of women aged 25 are married. By the time people reach age 45, 70% of men and 80% of women have got married. This is down on the 90% figure in 1970, but not nearly such a dramatic fall.



The next two charts use raw numbers – of first marriages only – to give a flavour of how the fall in overall marriage rates has been condensed into these early years.

In 1970, the peak year for marriages, 564,818 men and women under 25 got married. In 2010, just 56,598 did, a fall of 90%.

However across every other age group, marriage rates have been much less volatile with more marriages amongst the over 30s offsetting fewer marriages amongst 25-29 year olds amongst men and actually increasing amongst women.



THE ODDS OF MARRIAGE PER YEAR

What age do most people get married?

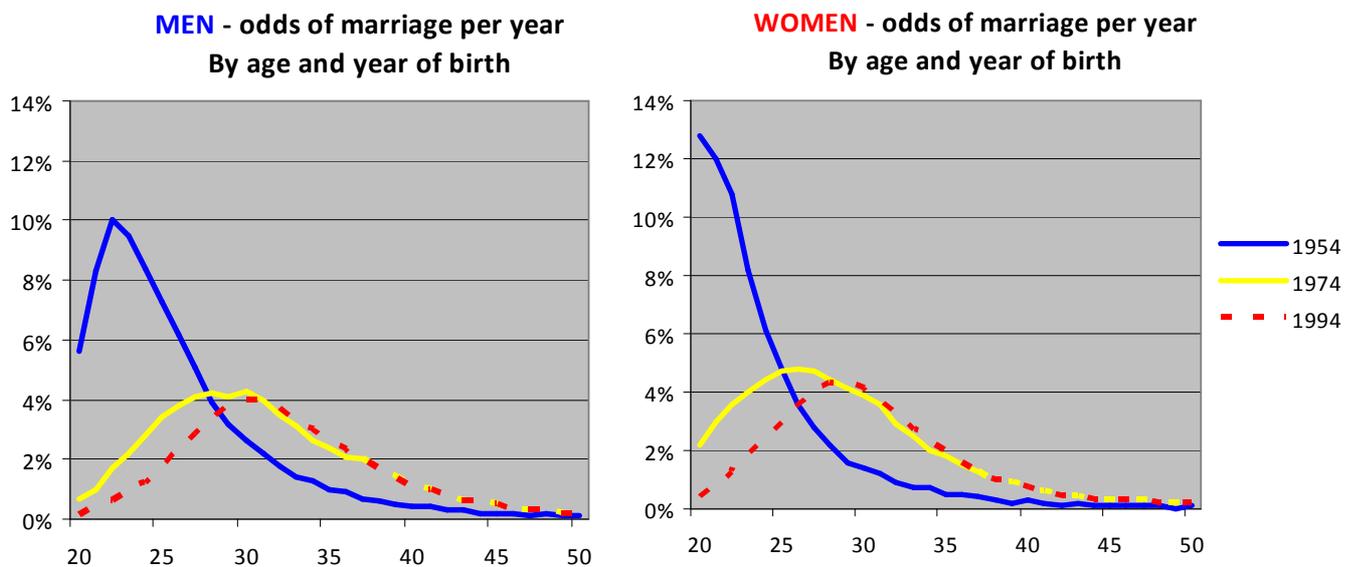
From now on I'm going to look at actual and predicted marriage rates amongst those who are currently aged 60, 40, and 20 years old. So that involves looking at those who were born in the years 1954, 1974 and 1994 respectively.

For both men and women, those now aged 60 – born in 1954 – tended to marry in their early 20s. The charts below show how marriages for this cohort were heavily concentrated amongst the under 25s.

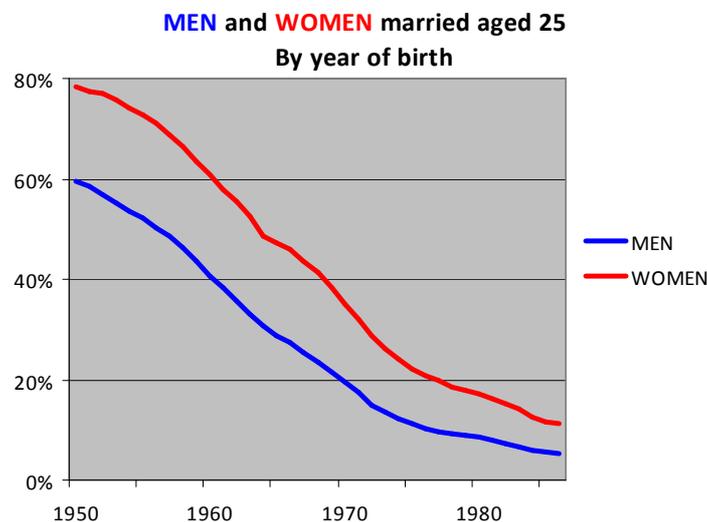
Amongst all age groups under 60, there are those who have not yet married but will do so. By applying the latest marriage rates for older men and women, I can make a reasonable prediction at what will happen for each cohort. In the charts below I have shown the predicted odds of marriage with dotted lines.

The next two charts below show how today's 40 year olds – born in 1974 – tended to marry in their late 20s and early 30s.

A similar pattern is predicted for those who are currently aged 20 – born in 1994 – but starting slightly later in their 20s.



This final chart shows quite how sharply the tendency to marry young has fallen off.



ACTUAL AND PREDICTED ODDS OF MARRIAGE

How many of my age group will get married eventually?

Cumulating all of the odds in the previous charts produces the actual proportion of older men and women who have married and predicts how many of today's younger couples will get married.

This gives a much clearer picture of the trend away from marriage.

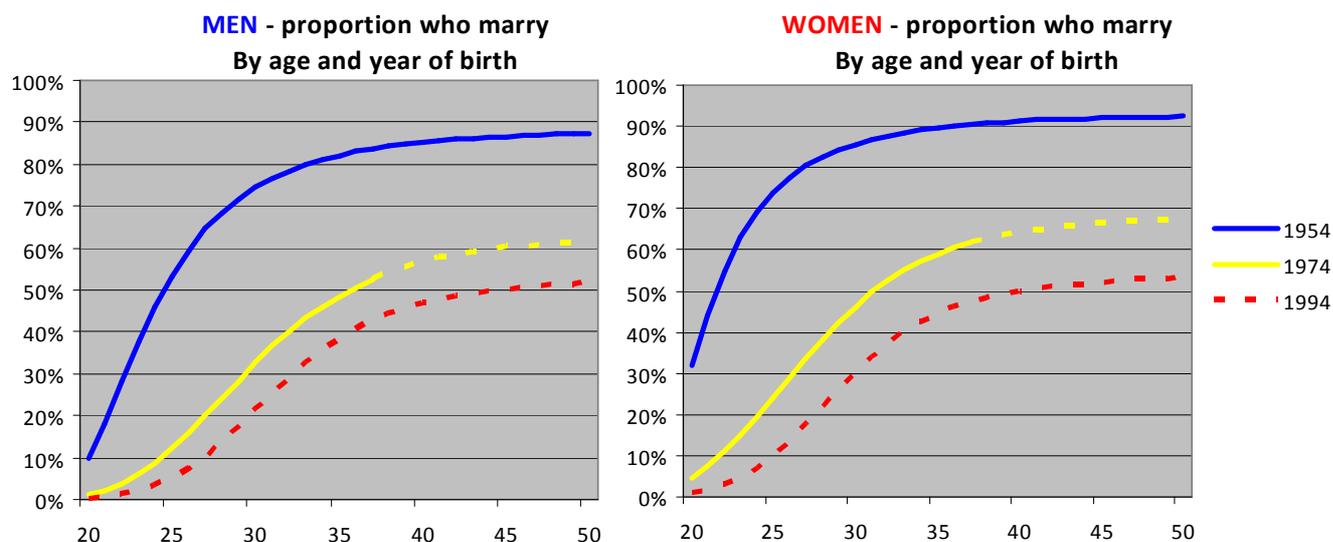
Amongst those now aged 60 – born in 1954 – 87% of men and 92% of women have got married at some stage.

Amongst those now aged 40 – born in 1974 – over half have already married. However I predict that the final proportion of this cohort will be 61% of men and 68% of women.

This already shows that 26% fewer men and 24% fewer women are getting married compared to the generation twenty years older.

Using the latest marriage rates, only 52% of today's 20 year old men and 53% of today's 20 year old women are predicted to get married.

This shows the full extent of the trend away from marriage. Forty years ago, almost all twenty year olds would expect to marry – and did. Today, just half will do so.



DATA SOURCE

All data for this analysis is taken from 'Marriage statistics, Cohabitation and Cohort analyses' from Office for National Statistics (June, 2013) Table 2, 'Proportions of men and women who had ever married by certain ages, for birth cohorts, 1900-1994' which is based on marriage statistics for England and Wales up to and including calendar year 2010.