Kingdom of Lesotho

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Vital Statistics Report - Marriage Statistics 2020

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Mission: To coordinate the National Statistical System (NSS) and produce accurate, timely and reliable culturally relevant and internationally comparable statistical data for evidence based planning, decision making, research, policy, program formulation and monitoring and evaluation to satisfy the needs of data users and producers

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BACKGROUND

Introduction

Marriage is a legal union of persons of opposite sex in the context of Lesotho. The foundation of the family for most societies is through the relationship between individuals of opposite sex who ultimately form a union called marriage. Marriage can include legal, social, and religious elements. It is usually understood as a male-female relationship designed to reproduce children and successfully socialize them. Historically, most societies have allowed some form of polygamy. Most of the world's populations including Lesotho now live in societies where polygamy is less common and marriages are overwhelmingly monogamous.

The 2020 marriage statistics report provides a summary of information on all marriages that occurred throughout the country during the year 2020. The Bureau of Statistics (BoS) obtains data relating to marriage from administrative records on marriages at the Law office (Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Law and Constitutional Affairs) and at National Identity and Civil Registry (NICR) at Ministry of Home Affairs. The data is then compiled, analyzed and published by the Bureau of Statistics.

Information on marriages is tabulated by place of occurrence and not place of residence. This is because marriages involve two individuals (the Bride and the Groom), who may have different places of residence.

Information is also provided on some characteristics of marriage such as date of marriage as well as some socio-demographic characteristics of both the Bride and Groom (that is; age at the time of registering marriage, previous marital status, district of solemnization, and whether special license or banns was issued).

Data Limitations

There are two systems of marriages in Lesotho, namely, Customary Law and Civil Law system. It is important to mention that not all marriages have been presented in this report because there are some marriages that are endorsed by the village chief (under Customary Law); these marriages are not registered with the Registrar of Marriages hence they are not covered by this report.

Number of Registered Marriages

The occurrences of registered marriage patterns are observed over time. Table 1 shows the number and percentage distribution of registered marriages from 2016 to 2020. In total, there were 11,557 registered marriages in Lesotho within a period of five years. The table shows that there were 1,738 marriages registered in 2020. The highest percentage of registered marriages was in 2016 at 22.8 percent and the least percentage was in 2020 at 15.0 percent.

Table 1: Number of Registered Marriages in Lesotho, 2016 to 2020

Year	Number	Percent
2016	2,640	22.8
2017	2,577	22.3
2018	2,288	19.8
2019	2,316	20.0
2020	1,738	15.0
Total	**11,557**	**100.0**

Age at Marriage

Age at marriage is of particular interest to population studies because it marks the beginning of regular exposure to the risks of childbearing. Figure 1 indicates the percentage distribution of marriages by age of the bride and of the groom. It is observed that the age group with the highest percentage of brides was 25 to 29 at 33.9 percent followed by those aged 30 to 34 at 23.4 percent. The least percentage of brides was observed in age group 15 to 19 with 1.8 percent. The figure further illustrates that most grooms tend to marry at age group 30 to 34 recording 26.9 percent while the least percentage of grooms is observed at age group 15 to 19 with 0.1 percent. It is observed in this figure that females are more likely to enter into marriages at a younger age than their male counterparts. Again, at the later stages of life (50 years and above), males (9.0 percent) are most likely to enter into marriages than females (2.2 percent).

Figure1: Percentage Distribution of Marriages by Age of the Bride and the Groom, 2020

Date of Marriage

The month in which marriage was solemnized is very crucial to couples that got in union as it marks their wedding anniversary. It also allows a person to remember the moment that changed one from being single to having a spouse. Figure 2 shows the percentage distribution of marriages by date of marriage. It shows that most marriages occurred in December at 20.7 percent while the least numbers of marriages were solemnized in April at 1.4 percent

Figure 2: Percentage Distribution of Marriages by Date of Marriage, 2020

Place of Marriage

The district where marriages occurred is regarded as the place where marriage was solemnized. Figure 3 illustrates the percentage distribution of marriages by place of marriage. It shows that the highest numbers of marriages were registered in Maseru as compared to other districts with 56.4 percent while the least numbers were observed in Mokhotlong with 0.7 percent. In general, all marriages registered during 2020 were less than 10 percent in all districts except Maseru and Berea.

Figure 3: Percentage Distribution of Marriages by Place of Marriage, 2020

Marital Status

Marital status of the bride and groom illustrates the marital condition that the bride and the groom were in at the time that they were registering the current marriage. Table 2 indicates the percentage distribution of marriages by marital status of the groom and bride at the time of marriage. It shows that the highest number of brides were single when they were registering for marriage with 74.7 percent while the least numbers of brides were widowed with 1.2 percent. As for grooms, most (70.9 percent) of them were also single when registering for marriage while the least were widowed with 3.0 percent.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Marriages by Marital Status, 2020

Marital status	Bride	Groom
Single	74.7	70.9
Divorced	1.8	3.7
Widowed	1.2	3.0
Customarily Married	22.3	22.3

Type of Solemnization

In Lesotho, there are two different types of authority under which a marriage may be solemnized: publication of banns (an announcement, especially in a church, of an intended marriage) and special license (a document issued by state authority authorizing a couple to marry). The term 'solemnization' refers to the type of license or authority, which is used to legalize a marriage.

Table 3 presents the percentage distribution of marriages by way of solemnization indicated as legal Preliminary of Special License over Banns. It shows that most marriages were solemnised religiously (58.8 percent) as opposed to Civil marriages (41.2 percent). Out of 58.8 percent that were religiously solemnised, 54.4 percent were by banns and 4.4 percent had applied for special licence. As for Civil marriages, most of them were also by banns with 41.2 percent.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Marriages by Type of Solemnization, 2020

License/Banns	Civil	Religious
Banns	41.2	54.4
License	0.0	4.4
Total	**41.2**	**58.8**

Annex

Registered Marriages, 2020

Year	Number
2016	2,640
2017	2,577
2018	2,288
2019	2,316
2020	1,738
Total	**12,741**

Marriages by Age Group, 2020

Age group	Bride	Groom
15-19	32	2
20-24	297	85
25-29	589	432
30-34	407	467
35-39	214	314
40-44	115	197
45-49	45	85
50+	39	156
Total	**1,738**	**1,738**

Place of Marriage, 2020

District	Number
Botha-Bothe	64
Leribe	168
Berea	222
Maseru	981
Mafeteng	113
Mohale's Hoek	55
Quthing	42
Qacha's Nek	30
Mokhotlong	12
Thaba-Tseka	51
Total	**1,738**

Date of Marriage, 2020

	Number
January	162
February	148
March	181
April	25
May	71
June	81
July	94
August	131
September	129
October	178
November	179
December	359
Total	**1,738**

Marital Status, 2020

	Bride	Groom
Single	1,298	1,233
Divorced	32	65
Widowed	21	53
Customarily Married	387	387
Total	**1,738**	**1,738**

Way of Solemnization, 2020

	Religious	Home Affairs
Banns	946	716
Licence	76	0
Total	**1,022**	**716**