# Marriage and Sexual Activity

## Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey 2023-24 Key Findings

## Introduction

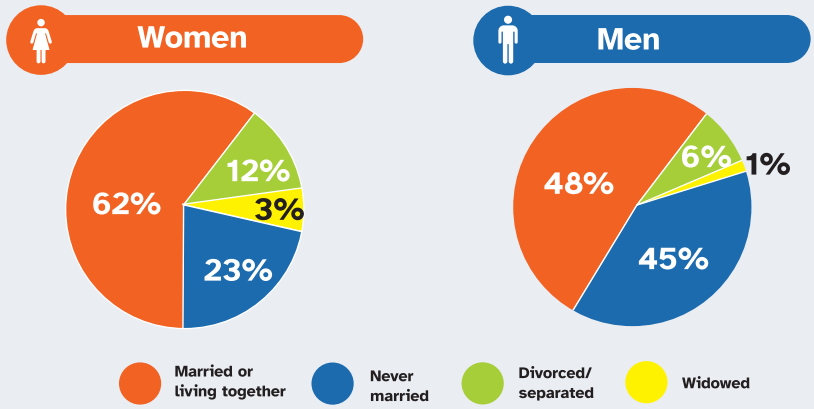
Marriage and sexual activity help determine the extent to which women are exposed to the risk of pregnancy, making them vital determinants of overall fertility levels.



## Marital Status Overview

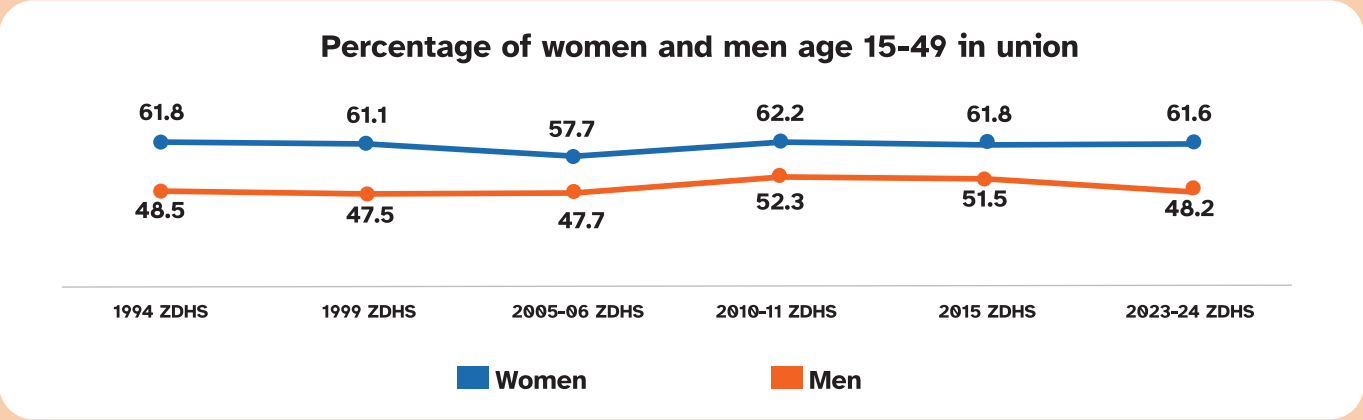
Women are more likely than men to be in a union **(62% vs 48%)**.

**Percentage of women and men age 15-49 likely to be in a union**



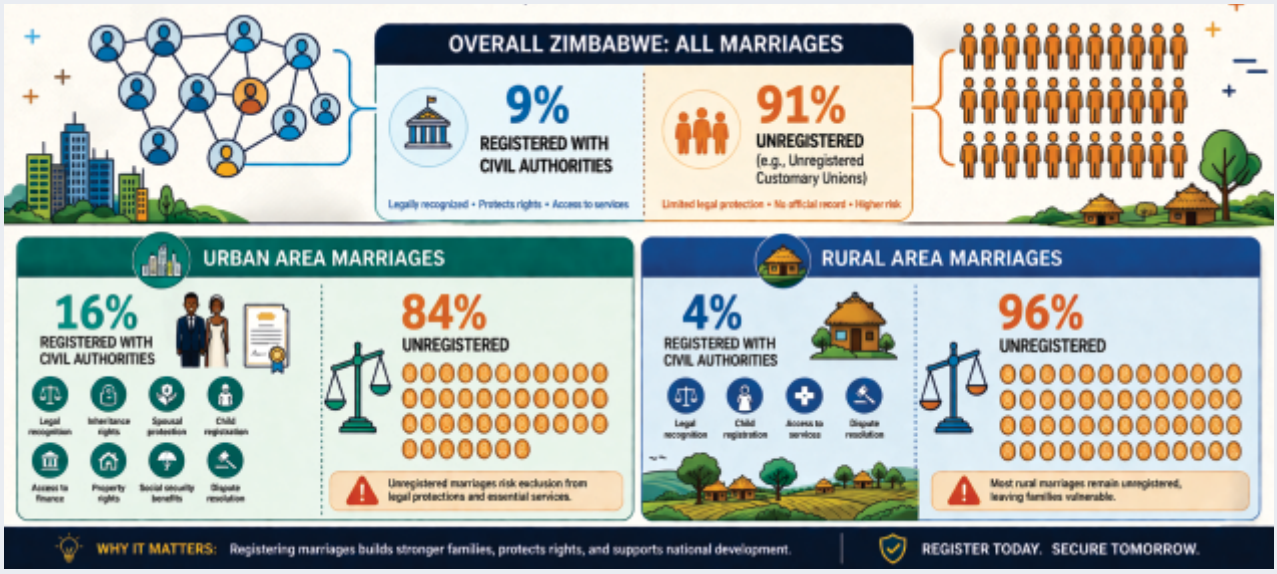

Marriage and union patterns have remained largely unchanged since 1999, with women consistently reporting higher rates of union than men.

*This factsheet describes the current state of marriage and sexual activity in Zimbabwe. It presents information on the marital status, proportions of men and women in unions, marriage registration, age at first marriage, age at first sex, number of co-wives and, sexual behaviours.*




## Marriage Registration

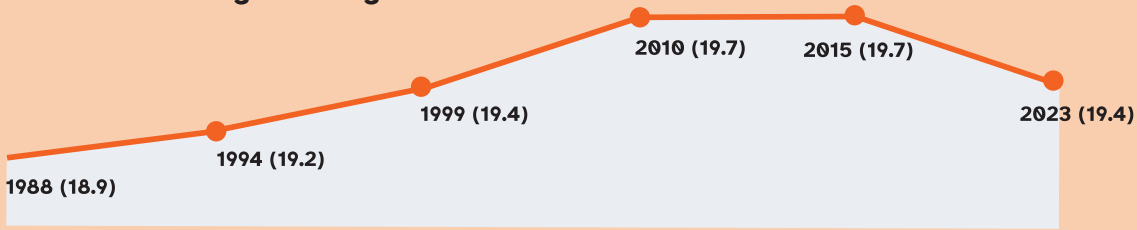
A significant majority of marriages in Zimbabwe lack legal recognition and civil registration. Only **9%** of marriages are registered, leaving **91%** unregistered (e.g., unregistered customary unions)




## Marriage Trends

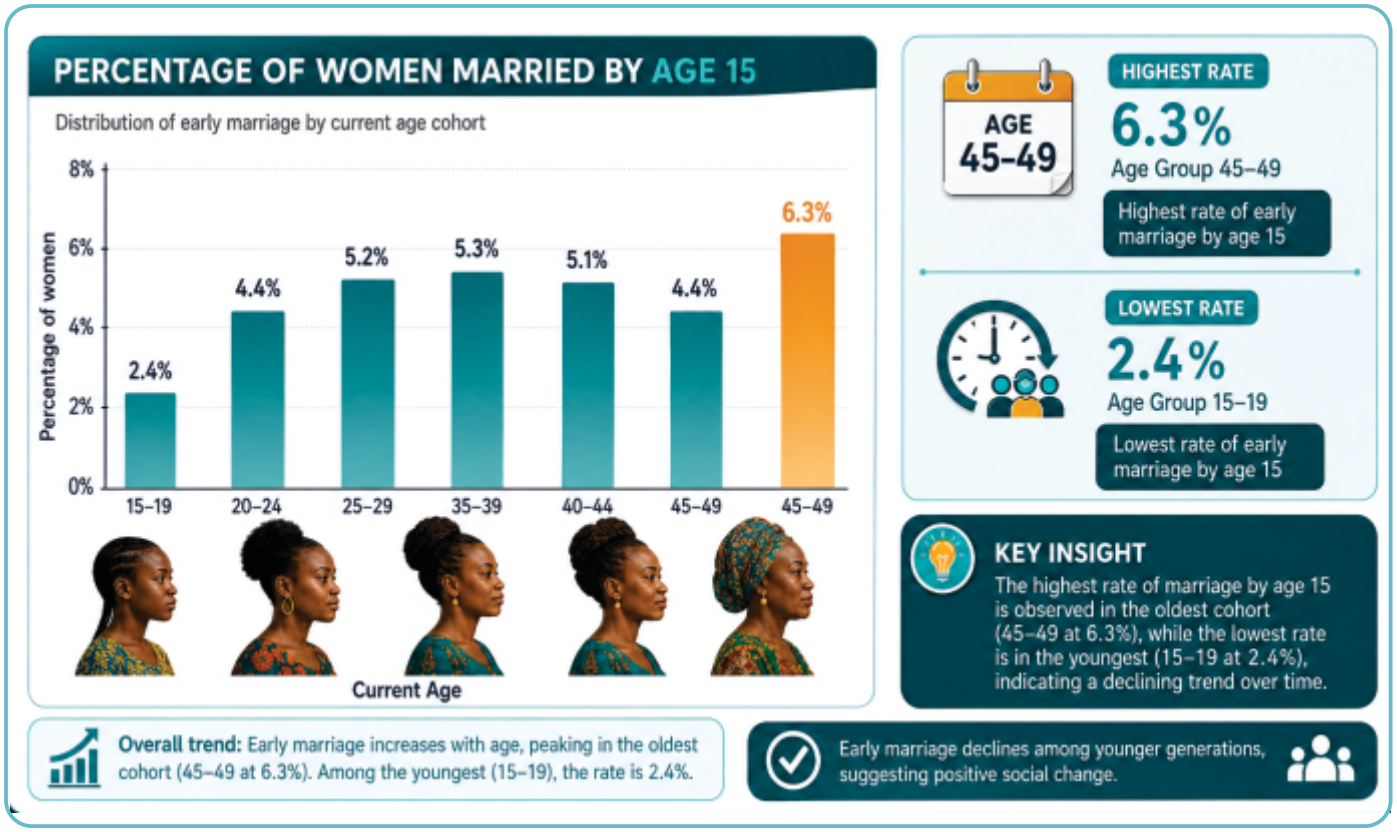
**Age at First Marriage:** The median age at first marriage among women rose gradually from **18.9** years in 1988 to **19.7** years in 2015, before slightly declining to **19.4** years in 2023–24.

**Median age at first marriage among women**



## Trends in early marriage( by age 15)

- Early marriage incidence has declined. The youngest cohort (15-19) shows only **2.4%** married by age 15 compared to **6.3%** for women age (45-49)




## Recent sexual activity

More than half of all respondents reported having sexual intercourse within the four weeks before the survey (**57%** of women and **55%** of men).

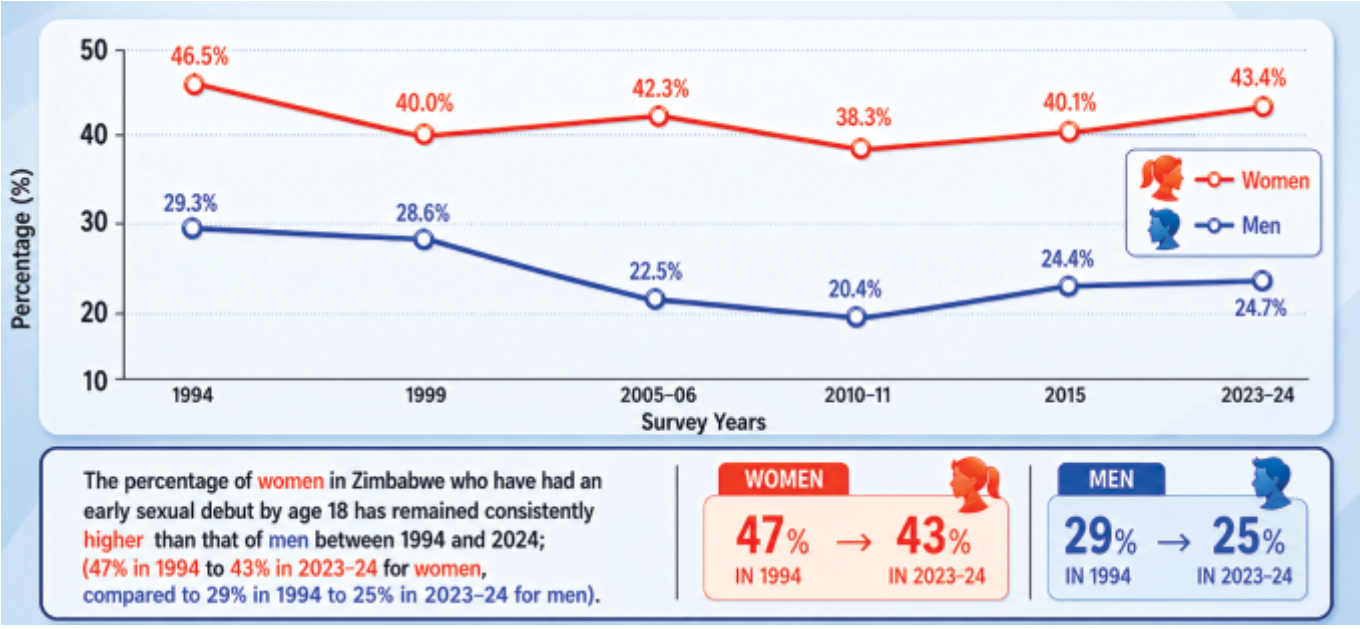
Respondents age 15-49 reporting sexual intercourse within the four weeks before the survey

**57%** **55%**

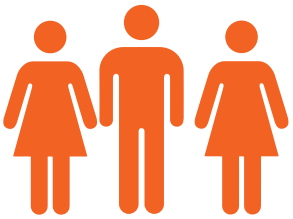
## First intercourse by age 18

The percentage of individuals having first intercourse by age 18 has remained consistently higher for women than for men over the last 30 years.

**Percentage of Women and men who had first intercourse by exact age 18**




## Polygyny (Multiple Wives)



The percentage of women reporting polygyny has steadily fallen from **18.3%** in 1994 to **10%** in 2023-24. Currently, **87%** of married women report having no co-wives.

**Appreciation goes to the following partners who have provided support to the ZDHS 2023-24**

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