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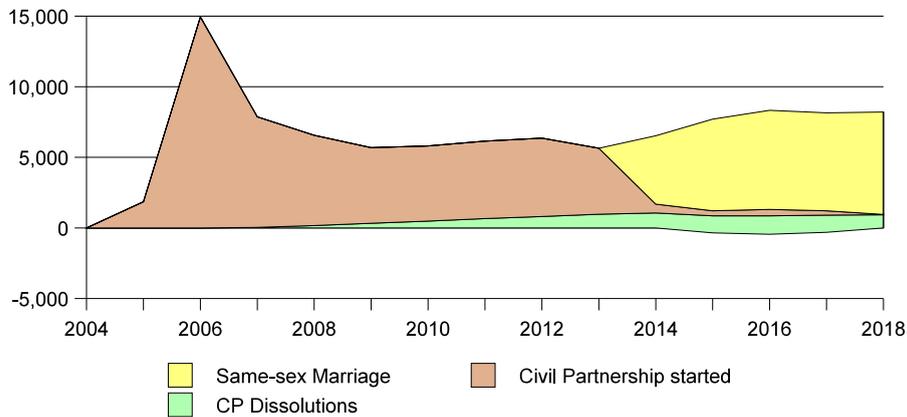
Civil Partnerships were first legalised from 21st December 2005, and although they recognised two unrelated people living together in the same household, they were not regarded as marriage. Then came same-sex marriages as from 29th March 2014, which were of course counted as marriages, recorded separately as male partnerships or female. Subsequently existing civil partnerships were also able to convert their relationship into a marriage.

The statistics behind these changes are interesting. In the four years 2014 to 2017 (later information is not yet available) some 25,300 same-sex marriages have taken place, some 560 per month on average. Just over two-fifths of these, 44%, were male marriages, and the remaining 56% were female. Very few, just 11%, took place in a Registry Office; virtually all the rest, 88%, were in Approved Premises, and just 1% (actually 0.7%) were in a Church.

The 171 which took place in a Church are too few to provide a realistic sample by sex or denomination, so details have not been released. Same-sex marriages are 2.6% of all marriages (or 1 in every 40), and religious same-sex marriages are 0.07% of them, one in every 1,400 of opposite-sex. The rarity of religious same-sex marriages reflects the fact that many churches are uncomfortable with same-sex marriage even if allowed by the law of the land, as well as the inference that same-sex couples prefer a civil ceremony or wouldn't want a church ceremony.

One of the differences between civil partnerships and same-sex marriages is that if the relationship breaks down, the partnership is dissolved, whereas in a marriage the parties are divorced. There is a third type of relationship for couples – co-habiting, again which can be same-sex or opposite-sex. When these breakdown, the couple just separate.

Figure 16.4: Number of civil partnerships and same-sex marriages, 2005 to 2018, England and Wales



The negative numbers in the chart reflect the fact that in the years 2015 to 2017 there were more dissolutions than new civil partnerships being established! To put civil partnerships into perspective, in 2006, their most numerous year, there were 14,900 started, while 248,000 other couples got married. The first figure is 6% of the second. Numbers of same-sex marriage divorces have yet to be published.

To put the same-sex issue into perspective, the latest figures of sexual identity may be helpful. They show that proportions have changed very little over the five years 2014 to 2018, although there is a trend for greater variations from heterosexual. The base figure is in millions. Age-wise, 96.7% of those aged 16 to 24 were heterosexual in 2014, 94.4% in 2018, and 99.0% and 98.8% respectively for those aged 65 or over.

Table 16.4: Sexuality of the population in the UK, 2014 and 2018

Sexuality	Men		Women	
	2014	2018	2014	2018
Heterosexual	97.7	96.9	98.5	97.3
Gay or Lesbian	1.6	1.9	0.7	0.9
Bisexuals	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.1
Others	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.7
Base (=100%)	24.491	25.263	25.740	26.412

Sources: Annual Population Survey and Marriage Statistics. Office for National Statistics, 2014-2018, October 2019.