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VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Advance Report

Final Marriage Statistics, 1977

FROM THE
NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

In 1977 there were 2,178,367 marriages performed in the United States, and the marriage rate was 10.1 per 1,000 population. Both the number of marriages and the marriage rate increased about 1 percent over the comparable figures for 1976. Provisional data for 1978 indicate further increases over the number and rate for 1977.

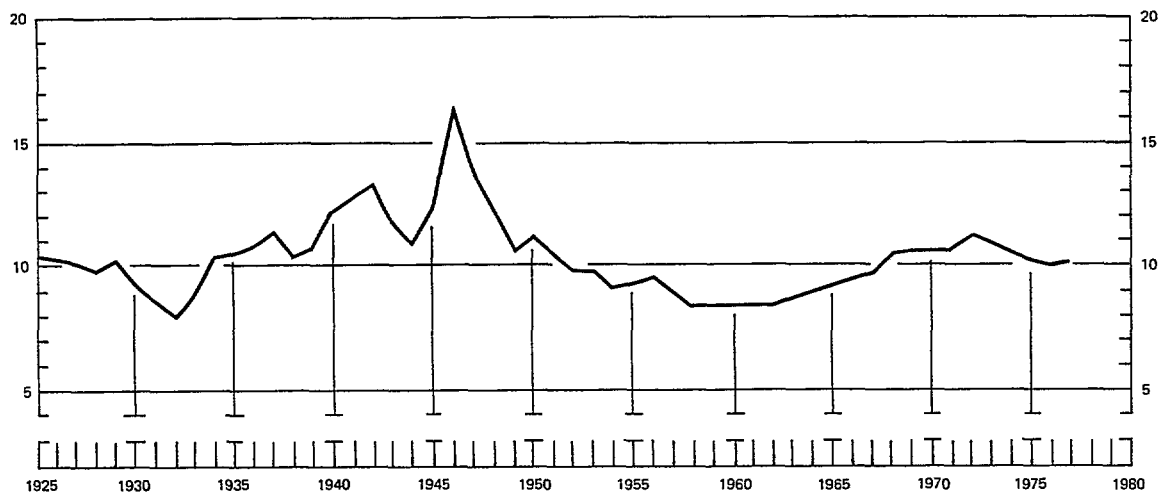
The increase in marriages between 1976 and 1977 was accompanied by an even greater increase in the population of American women eligible to marry, including the single, widowed, and divorced. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the population of unmarried women 15 years of age and over increased about 1.2 million, or almost 4 percent, between 1976 and 1977. Because the number of unmarried

women 15 years of age and over in the population grew faster than the total population, the marriage rate per 1,000 unmarried women aged 15 years and over decreased in 1977, while the crude marriage rate per 1,000 total population moved slightly upward. In 1977 the more specific marriage rate of 63.6 per 1,000 unmarried women aged 15 years and over was 2.5 percent lower than the rate for 1976 (65.2) and 20.5 percent below the peak rate of the past 20 years (80.0 in 1969). The 1977 rate indicates that only about 6 percent of all unmarried American women aged 15 years and over married in 1977.

The marriage rate per 1,000 population increased in 26 States and the District of Columbia, while there was a decrease in the rate in 17 States. The usual regional variation occurred,

MARRIAGE RATE: UNITED STATES, 1925-77

PER 1,000 POPULATION



with the highest rates in the South (11.5) and West (11.4) and the lowest rate in the Northeast Region (7.6).

Marriage rates by age, sex, and previous marital status are based on data from a sample of marriage certificates from the marriage-registration area (MRA), which has been comprised of 41 States and the District of Columbia since 1971. In 1977 all marriage rates based on data from the MRA exclude data for Iowa, because Iowa did not require reporting of previous marital status in that year.

For the MRA in recent years the first marriage rate for women has typically been about one-fifth higher than that for men, while the remarriage rate for men has been about three times the rate for women. Remarriage rates are highest among previously divorced men and lowest among previously widowed women. In recent years the remarriage rate for widowers has been more than four times the rate for widows, and the remarriage rate for divorced men has been about two-thirds greater than that for divorced women. These marriage differentials continued to prevail in 1977.

Since 1971 a marked decline has occurred in the marriage rate for each marital status group, and this decline generally continued in 1977. The first marriage rate for men declined 23 percent, from 67.9 per 1,000 single men in 1971 to 52.0 in 1977, and the rate for women declined 24 percent, from 82.8 per 1,000 single women to 62.7. The remarriage rate for the widowed population declined more for women (down 21 percent, from 9.6 per 1,000 in 1971 to 7.6 in 1977) than for men (down 17 percent, from 42.5 per 1,000 in 1971 to 35.3 in 1977). In contrast, the remarriage rate for the divorced population declined more for men (down 25 percent, from 230.7 per 1,000 in 1971 to 173.4 in 1977) than for women (down 19 percent, from 132.8 per 1,000 in 1971 to 107.3 in 1977).

The recent decline in marriage rates has been especially strong in certain age groups. Between 1971 and 1977 the rates for first marriages declined by close to one-third among single men and women in the age groups 14-17 years, 18-19 years, and 20-24 years. Over the same period, remarriage rates dropped by more than one-third

among divorced men in the age group 14-24 years and by at least one-quarter in the age groups 25-44 and 45-64 years. Among divorced women in each age group, remarriage rates dropped by more than one-fifth between 1971 and 1977.

Remarriages comprise an increasing proportion of all marriages. In the MRA between 1971 and 1977 the proportion of marriages involving previously married brides increased from 24 to 32 percent, while the proportion involving previously single brides declined from 76 to 68 percent. Similar changes occurred for men. These figures assume that the marriages for which marriage order was not stated were distributed the same as those for which it was stated.

Accompanying the decline in first marriage rates, there has been a recent rise in the age at first marriage. The median age of brides at first marriage increased from 20.6 in 1974 to 21.1 in 1977, and the median age of grooms at first marriage increased from 22.5 to 23.0. The median ages at first marriage remained almost constant from the midsixties to 1974, fluctuating very little around a median age of 20.5 years for brides and of 22.5 years for grooms.

Between 1970 and 1977 the median age at remarriage of previously divorced brides fluctuated very little around 30.2 years, after declining from 31.8 in 1963 to 30.1 in 1970. In contrast, the median age at remarriage of previously divorced grooms declined steadily, from 36.4 years in 1964 to 33.6 years in 1974, and has been almost constant at 33.6 years since 1974.

Between 1968 and 1977 there was a generally upward trend in the median age at remarriage among previously widowed persons. For widowed brides the median increased over this period, from 50.6 to 53.1 years, and for widowed grooms it increased from 57.9 to 60.1 years.

The statistics for the MRA presented in this report are based on sample data and consequently are subject to sampling variability as well as other sources of error. Further discussion of sampling variability appears in the Technical Notes.

Table 1. MARRIAGES AND MARRIAGE RATES: UNITED STATES, 1958-77

[Data refer only to events occurring within the United States. Alaska included beginning 1959 and Hawaii beginning 1960]

Year	Marriages	Rate per 1,000 ¹ —		
		Total population	Unmarried women 15 years and over	Unmarried women 15-44 years
1977.....	2,178,367	10.1	63.6	109.8
1976.....	2,154,807	10.0	65.2	113.4
1975.....	2,152,662	10.1	66.9	118.5
1974.....	2,229,667	10.5	72.0	128.4
1973.....	2,284,108	10.9	76.0	137.3
1972.....	2,282,154	11.0	77.9	141.3
1971.....	2,190,481	10.6	76.2	138.9
1970.....	2,158,802	10.6	76.5	140.2
1969.....	2,145,000	10.6	80.0	149.1
1968.....	2,069,000	10.4	79.1	147.2
1967.....	1,927,000	9.7	76.4	145.2
1966.....	1,857,000	9.5	75.6	145.1
1965.....	1,800,000	9.3	75.0	144.3
1964.....	1,725,000	9.0	74.6	146.2
1963.....	1,654,000	8.8	73.4	143.3
1962.....	1,577,000	8.5	71.2	138.4
1961.....	1,548,000	8.5	72.2	145.4
1960.....	1,523,000	8.5	73.5	148.0
1959.....	1,494,000	8.5	73.6	149.8
1958.....	1,451,000	8.4	72.0	146.3

¹Data are based on population enumerated as of April 1 for 1960 and 1970 and estimated as of July 1 for all other years.

SYMBOLS

Data not available.....	---
Category not applicable.....	...
Quantity zero.....	-
Quantity more than 0 but less than 0.05.....	0.0
Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision.....	*

This report represents summary tabulations from the final marriage statistics for 1977. More detailed tabulations for 1977 will be published in *Vital Statistics of the United States, Volume III—Marriage and Divorce*. Prior to the publication of that volume, the National Center for Health Statistics will respond to requests for unpublished data whenever possible.

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Table 2. MARRIAGES AND MARRIAGE RATES: UNITED STATES, EACH REGION, DIVISION, AND STATE, 1975-77

[By place of occurrence. Data are counts of marriages performed except as noted. Rates per 1,000 population in each area, estimated as of July 1]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate			Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1977	1976	1975	1977	1976	1975		1977	1976	1975	1977	1976	1975
United States...	2,178,367	2,154,807	2,152,662	10.1	10.0	10.1	West North Central:						
Northeast	372,666	374,297	384,186	7.6	7.6	7.8	Minnesota	33,038	² 32,034	32,261	8.3	² 8.1	8.2
North Central	552,000	544,351	549,356	9.5	9.4	9.5	Iowa	26,419	25,727	25,616	9.2	9.0	8.9
South	805,281	792,837	776,727	11.5	11.5	11.4	Missouri	52,100	51,070	50,147	10.9	10.7	10.5
West	448,420	443,322	442,393	11.4	11.5	11.7	North Dakota	5,668	5,650	5,993	8.7	8.8	9.4
							South Dakota	10,359	10,781	11,074	15.0	15.7	16.2
							Nebraska	13,387	13,431	13,087	8.6	8.6	8.5
							Kansas	23,673	23,559	23,767	10.2	10.2	10.5
Northeast:							South Atlantic:						
New England.....	97,317	95,596	96,761	7.9	7.8	7.9	Delaware	3,993	3,943	3,944	6.9	6.8	6.8
Middle Atlantic....	275,349	278,701	287,425	7.4	7.5	7.7	Maryland	45,109	44,616	44,776	10.9	10.8	10.9
North Central:							District of Columbia...	4,640	4,611	4,911	6.7	6.6	6.9
East North Central..	387,356	382,099	387,411	9.4	9.3	9.5	Virginia	57,778	56,469	54,688	11.3	11.2	11.0
West North Central..	164,644	162,252	161,945	9.8	9.7	9.7	West Virginia	17,484	17,229	17,041	9.4	9.5	9.5
South:							North Carolina	43,490	42,475	42,310	7.9	7.8	7.8
South Atlantic.....	380,790	372,134	366,591	11.1	10.9	10.9	South Carolina	51,314	50,698	50,249	17.8	17.8	17.8
East South Central..	¹ 160,109	159,488	155,226	¹ 11.6	11.7	11.5	Georgia	67,388	65,950	63,245	13.3	13.3	12.8
West South Central..	264,382	261,215	254,910	12.2	12.3	12.2	Florida	89,594	86,143	85,427	10.6	10.2	10.2
West:							East South Central:						
Mountain	219,457	216,208	212,045	21.9	22.0	22.0	Kentucky	¹ 32,245	32,931	32,068	¹ 9.3	9.6	9.4
Pacific	228,963	227,114	230,348	7.8	7.9	8.2	Tennessee	55,327	53,270	51,530	12.9	12.6	12.3
							Alabama	45,694	46,515	45,349	12.4	12.7	12.5
							Mississippi	26,843	26,772	26,279	11.2	11.4	11.2
							West South Central:						
							Arkansas	24,028	24,913	24,337	11.2	11.8	11.5
							Louisiana	38,645	37,999	37,309	9.9	9.9	9.8
							Oklahoma	42,133	40,983	40,110	15.0	14.8	14.8
							Texas	159,576	157,320	153,154	12.4	12.6	12.5
New England:							West North Central:						
Maine.....	11,446	11,302	11,190	10.5	10.6	10.6	Minnesota	7,547	7,390	7,331	9.9	9.8	9.8
New Hampshire.....	8,902	8,550	8,831	10.5	10.4	10.8	Idaho	13,691	13,104	12,688	16.0	15.8	15.5
Vermont	4,774	4,396	4,553	9.9	9.2	9.7	Wyoming	6,012	5,862	5,649	14.8	15.0	15.1
Massachusetts	41,947	41,501	42,103	7.3	7.1	7.2	Colorado	30,063	28,601	27,565	11.5	11.1	10.9
Rhode Island	7,114	6,905	6,695	7.6	7.4	7.2	New Mexico ³	16,385	15,616	15,790	13.8	13.4	13.8
Connecticut	23,134	22,942	23,389	7.4	7.4	7.6	Arizona	26,955	26,534	26,558	11.7	11.7	11.9
Middle Atlantic:							Utah	15,098	14,693	14,905	11.9	12.0	12.4
New York	133,830	136,968	142,752	7.5	7.6	7.9	Nevada	103,706	³ 104,408	101,559	163.8	³ 171.2	171.6
New Jersey	50,677	51,291	53,008	6.9	7.0	7.2							
Pennsylvania	90,842	90,442	91,665	7.7	7.6	7.8	Pacific:						
East North Central:							Washington.....	43,835	41,986	41,807	12.0	11.6	11.8
Ohio	99,352	96,776	101,135	9.3	9.1	9.4	Oregon	20,303	19,182	19,322	8.5	8.2	8.4
Indiana	56,424	55,699	56,075	10.6	10.5	10.6	California ⁴	149,416	151,284	154,812	6.8	7.0	7.3
Illinois	108,100	110,847	111,459	9.6	9.9	10.0							
Michigan	86,088	82,753	82,856	9.4	9.1	9.0	Alaska	5,143	4,893	4,734	12.6	12.8	13.4
Wisconsin	37,392	36,024	35,886	8.0	7.8	7.8	Hawaii	10,266	9,769	9,673	11.5	11.0	11.2

¹Data are incomplete.²Data are estimated.³Marriage licenses issued.⁴Data exclude 19,061 nonlicensed marriages registered in 1975; 30,125 registered in 1976; and 32,008 registered in 1977.

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Table 3. MARRIAGES AND MARRIAGE RATES BY AGE AND PREVIOUS MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN AND MEN: MARRIAGE- REGISTRATION AREA,¹ 1976-77

[By place of occurrence. Based on sample data. Rates per 1,000 population in specified group, estimated as of July 1 of each year. Figures for age not stated are distributed]

Age and previous marital status	Women				Men							
	Number		Rate ²		Number		Rate ²					
	1977 ³	1976	1977 ⁴	1976	1977 ³	1976	1977 ⁴	1976				
ALL MARRIAGES												
Total	1,723,845	1,706,628	53.7	55.1	1,723,845	1,706,628	65.1	66.6				
14-17 years	130,817	142,059	18.9	20.3	21,164	23,938	2.9	3.2				
18-19 years	312,969	324,033	103.6	110.1	164,834	179,431	47.6	52.4				
20-24 years	636,551	621,975	140.1	148.2	654,068	651,843	115.4	121.5				
25-44 years	530,259	501,343	104.8	109.2	717,432	682,036	138.3	141.2				
25-29 years	276,064	263,086	139.3	143.3	373,291	361,335	150.8	156.0				
30-34 years	131,994	120,182	105.4	114.1	181,132	163,405	143.4	143.0				
35-44 years	122,201	118,075	66.9	69.4	163,009	157,296	112.5	114.8				
45-64 years	96,489	100,773	19.4	20.8	135,626	137,844	50.8	53.7				
65 years and over	16,760	16,445	2.2	2.2	30,721	31,536	14.2	15.6				
FIRST MARRIAGES												
Total	1,146,519	1,162,528	62.7	64.8	1,117,626	1,132,320	52.0	53.1				
14-17 years	126,022	138,399	18.4	19.8	20,280	23,494	2.8	3.2				
18-19 years	292,102	307,282	99.6	105.1	158,679	174,664	46.7	51.0				
20-24 years	524,452	521,199	125.6	133.4	584,790	591,069	107.7	113.0				
25-44 years	194,511	185,277	78.6	81.8	338,458	327,089	91.9	91.7				
25-29 years	142,429	135,086	105.7	109.1	244,475	237,833	119.3	119.8				
30-34 years	34,706	31,855	64.3	67.2	64,759	58,706	76.0	72.8				
35-44 years	17,376	18,336	29.6	30.0	29,224	30,550	37.3	39.3				
45-64 years	8,528	9,440	8.6	9.3	13,981	14,415	11.8	12.4				
65 years and over	904	931	1.0	1.1	1,438	1,589	2.5	3.1				
REMARRIAGES												
Total	531,823	518,140	40.0	39.7	562,470	549,665	122.4	127.6				
14-19 years	11,555	12,214	} 323.5	} 324.4	1,608	1,744	} 361.0	} 384.3				
20-24 years	92,624	90,292			48,572	49,753						
25-44 years	325,616	310,023	129.0	133.2	363,887	346,664	253.4	274.5				
25-29 years	127,848	124,389	209.6	208.0	119,592	118,486	306.6	358.0				
30-34 years	94,959	86,987	136.2	150.2	113,113	102,869	285.6	305.2				
35-44 years	102,809	98,647	84.4	86.0	131,182	125,309	202.4	211.7				
45-64 years	86,471	90,303	22.1	23.5	119,601	121,971	82.0	86.8				
65 years and over	15,557	15,308	2.4	2.3	28,802	29,533	18.5	19.6				
Previously widowed ⁵	61,262	64,357	7.6	7.9	55,886	57,955	35.3	37.6				
14-24 years	1,951	2,220	} 57.3	} 56.0	512	423	} 159.3	} 204.6				
25-44 years	16,557	16,422			8,090	8,783						
45-64 years	31,169	34,110			14.0	15.2			27,661	28,605	66.3	68.9
65 years and over	11,585	11,605			2.1	2.1			19,623	20,144	17.7	18.6

See footnotes at the end of table.

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Table 3. MARRIAGES AND MARRIAGE RATES BY AGE AND PREVIOUS MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN AND MEN: MARRIAGE-REGISTRATION AREA,¹ 1976-77—Con.

[By place of occurrence. Based on sample data. Rates per 1,000 population in specified group, estimated as of July 1 of each year. Figures for age not stated are distributed]

Age and previous marital status	Women				Men			
	Number		Rate ²		Number		Rate ²	
	1977 ³	1976	1977 ⁴	1976	1977 ³	1976	1977 ⁴	1976
REMARRIAGES—Con.								
Previously divorced ⁵	390,829	377,388	107.3	111.3	422,597	410,988	173.4	185.0
14-19 years	9,645	10,300	347.3	339.4	1,339	1,403	347.9	391.8
20-24 years	76,489	74,218			39,367	41,301		
25-44 years	259,838	248,079	137.3	144.0	302,007	286,988	252.9	270.2
45-64 years	42,961	42,889	35.6	37.5	74,372	75,368	85.1	91.5
65 years and over	1,896	1,902	6.4	6.9	5,512	5,928	21.9	26.1
Not stated if widowed or divorced ⁶ ..	79,732	76,395	...	...	83,987	80,722	...	...
NOT STATED IF PREVIOUSLY MARRIED⁷	45,503	25,960	...	...	43,749	24,643	...	...

¹Sampling errors of estimates and a description of the MRA appear in the Technical Notes.

²Base populations exclude persons under 14 years of age. Rates for all marriages are based on the unmarried population; for first marriages, on the never-married population; and for remarriages, on the widowed and divorced populations.

³Figures for first marriages and remarriages exclude data for Iowa; these data are included in Not stated if previously married.

⁴All rates exclude data for Iowa.

⁵Data exclude remarriages in Michigan, Ohio, and South Carolina.

⁶Data include all remarriages in Michigan, Ohio, and South Carolina.

⁷Figures are included in all marriages.

Table 4. MEDIAN AGES OF BRIDE AND GROOM BY PREVIOUS MARITAL STATUS: MARRIAGE-REGISTRATION AREA, 1963-77

[Based on sample data. For a description of the Marriage-Registration Area, see Technical Notes]

Year	Median age of bride					Median age of groom				
	Total	First marriage	Remarriage	Previously divorced ¹	Previously widowed ¹	Total	First marriage	Remarriage	Previously divorced ¹	Previously widowed ¹
1977 ²	22.9	21.1	31.4	30.2	53.1	25.2	23.0	34.9	33.6	60.1
1976.....	22.7	21.0	31.7	30.1	53.0	25.0	22.9	35.1	33.7	60.0
1975.....	22.4	20.8	32.0	30.2	52.4	24.7	22.7	35.5	33.6	59.4
1974.....	22.0	20.6	32.1	30.0	51.9	24.2	22.5	35.7	33.6	59.2
1973.....	21.9	20.6	32.3	30.2	52.1	24.1	22.5	36.3	33.9	59.3
1972.....	21.7	20.5	32.8	30.3	51.4	23.8	22.4	36.5	34.0	59.1
1971.....	21.7	20.5	32.9	30.2	51.8	23.7	22.5	36.9	34.1	59.1
1970.....	21.7	20.6	33.3	30.1	51.2	23.6	22.5	37.5	34.5	58.7
1969.....	21.6	20.6	33.8	30.4	51.3	23.5	22.4	38.2	34.7	59.0
1968.....	21.5	20.6	33.8	30.7	50.6	23.6	22.4	38.3	35.1	57.9
1967.....	21.4	20.5	35.0	31.3	50.0	23.8	22.6	39.1	35.5	57.7
1966.....	21.5	20.3	35.2	31.4	50.2	23.8	22.6	39.2	35.8	57.9
1965.....	21.4	20.4	35.5	31.7	50.1	23.6	22.5	39.6	36.0	57.8
1964.....	21.4	20.4	35.6	31.7	50.3	23.6	22.4	39.7	36.4	58.0
1963.....	21.3	20.3	35.6	31.8	49.7	23.7	22.5	39.8	36.3	58.0

¹Figures for previously divorced and previously widowed exclude data for Michigan and Ohio for all years, for South Carolina beginning with 1972, and for the District of Columbia for 1970.

²Figures for first marriage, remarriage, previously divorced, and previously widowed exclude data for Iowa.

TECHNICAL NOTES

Place and Time of Occurrence

Marriages are those performed during the year. Marriages and marriage rates for States and other areas are by place of occurrence. In table 2, however, figures for marriages shown for some States are by place and date the marriage license was issued.

Sources of Data

Figures in tables 1 and 2 are based on totals reported by States and counties. All other figures in the tables are based on data tabulated from State-coded data tapes and from probability samples of records selected and coded in the National Center for Health Statistics from copies of the records sent in by States participating in the marriage-registration area (MRA). In 1976 and 1977 the MRA consisted of the District of Columbia and all the States except nine—Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington. It covered around 80 percent of the marriages registered in the United States.

Marriage Sample

Twelve States—Florida, Illinois, Maine, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York (except New York City), Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, and Virginia—supplied State-coded data tapes of all their marriage records through the Cooperative Health Statistics System, and 100 percent of these records were used by NCHS. For all other States in the MRA, records were sampled at different rates designed to give a sample of at least 2,500 for each State. All records were included in the sample for Alaska, Delaware, and the District of Columbia, where totals of less than 5,000 marriages had been anticipated, and for New York City. One-half of all records were included from 3 States, one-fifth from 6 States, one-tenth from 10 States, and one-twentieth from 8 States. The total sample size, including records supplied through the Cooperative Health Statistics System, was 663,667

APPROXIMATE SAMPLING ERRORS OF ESTIMATED NUMBERS OF MARRIAGES SHOWN IN TABLE 3: MARRIAGE-REGISTRATION AREA, 1976-77

Percent of total MRA marriages in subclass	1977 sampling error	1976 sampling error
1 or 99	401	424
2 or 98	565	597
3 or 97	688	728
4 or 96	790	836
5 or 95	879	930
7 or 93	1,029	1,088
10 or 90	1,210	1,279
15 or 85	1,440	1,523
20 or 80	1,614	1,706
25 or 75	1,747	1,847
50	2,017	2,132

How to use the Sampling Error table

Total numbers of MRA marriages in 1976 and 1977 were 1,706,628 and 1,723,845, respectively. For any estimate of marriage shown in table 3, determine its ratio to total MRA marriages for the corresponding year. Then look in the appropriate row on the table of sampling errors for the percentage figures closest to the estimate to determine the sampling error for that year. For example, in 1976 there were an estimated 377,388 marriages to women who had been previously divorced, or 22.1 percent of all 1976 MRA marriages. Since 22.1 percent is between 20 and 25 percent, the 1976 sampling error is between 1,706 and 1,847, or by interpolation, about 1,765 marriages. Chances are about 68 out of 100 that the actual number of 1976 marriages to divorcees is between 375,623 and 379,153 (377,388 \pm 1,765).

marriages. Sampling errors shown in the following table are for frequencies which equal a specified percent of the total MRA marriages for either 1976 or 1977.

Sampling Errors

All statistics for the MRA are estimates based on the systematic sample of marriages described above; therefore, these statistics are subject to sampling errors. A sampling error is a measure of variations that occur by chance between sample estimates and the actual quantity being estimated. Chances are about 68 out of 100 that an estimate would differ from the true value by less than the sampling error, and about 95 out of 100 that the difference would be less than twice the sampling error.