

Monthly

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National Center for Health Statistics
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VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Advance Report

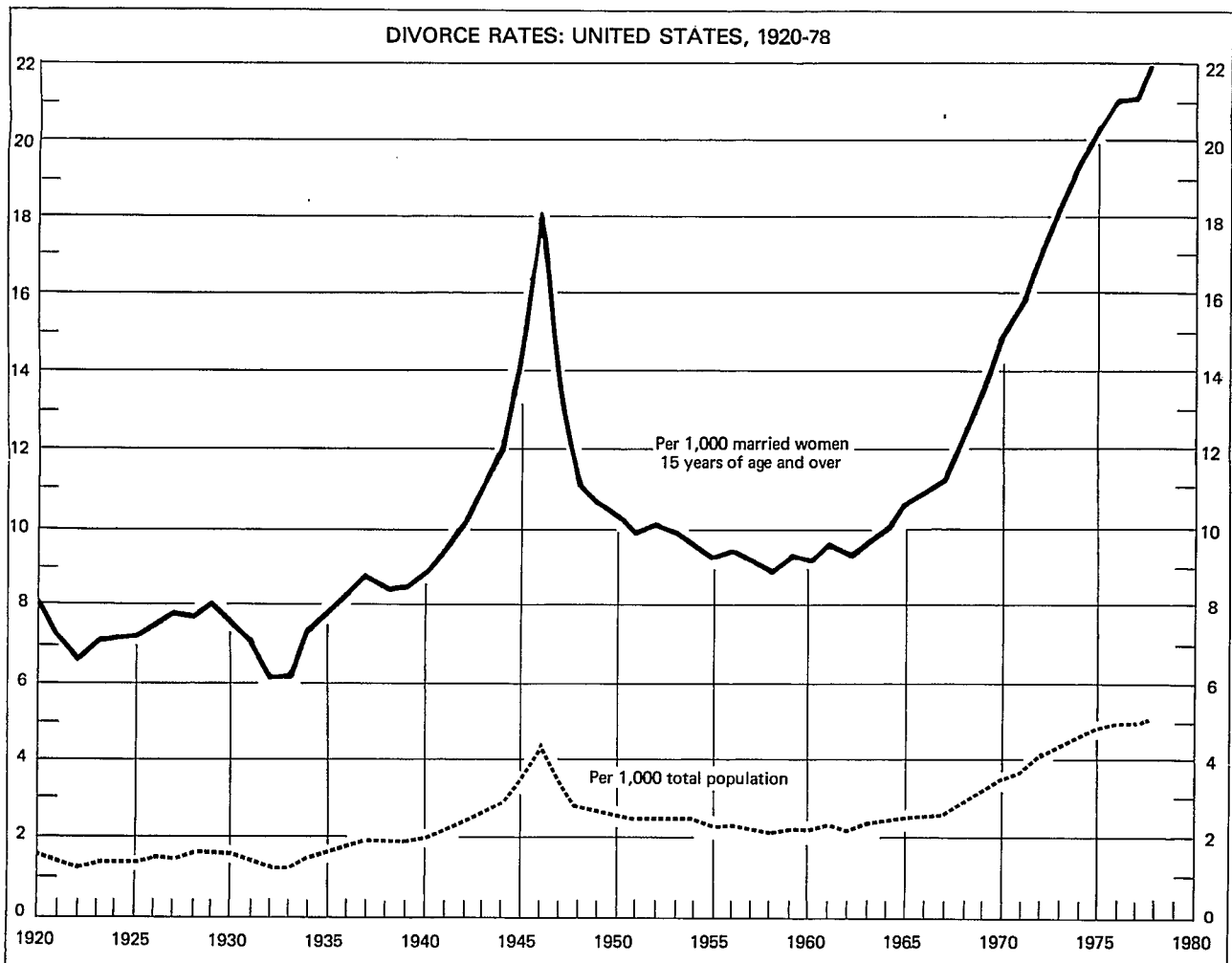
Final Divorce Statistics, 1978

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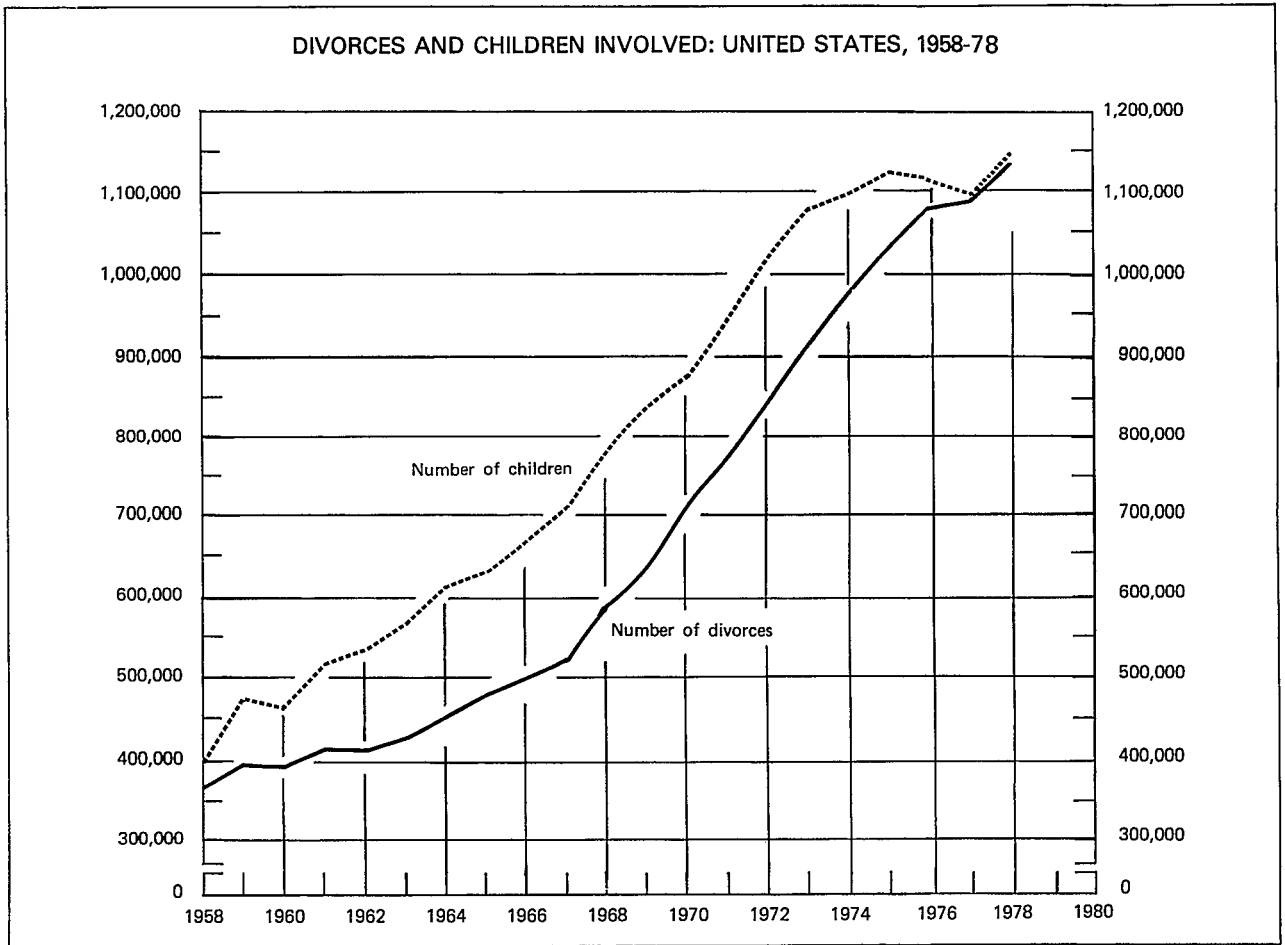
FROM THE
NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

An estimated 1,130,000 divorces were granted in the United States during 1978. This was 39,000, or 3.6 percent, higher than the total for 1977 (1,091,000). Provisional data for 1979 indicate a similar increase (40,000) over the final number recorded for 1978.

In 1978 the national divorce rate resumed the upward trend that had characterized its movement between 1963 and 1976. The rate was 5.2 per 1,000 population in 1978, up 4 percent over the rate of 5.0 recorded for both 1976 and 1977. Provisional data for 1979 indicate a



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further rise in the divorce rate of about 2 percent over the final rate observed for 1978.

Showing a similar increase, the divorce rate per 1,000 married women was 21.9 for 1978. This was an increase of 3.8 percent over the rate for both 1976 and 1977 (21.1). Except for 1977 the divorce rate per 1,000 married women has increased each year since 1963. The largest increases were in 1968-70, averaging 11 percent annually for these 3 years. The rate for 1978 was more than twice the rate of 10.9 recorded in 1966.

Regional divorce statistics for 1977 indicated that the divorce rate remained the same as in 1976 for three regions. In a fourth region, the West, there was a downturn in 1977; this represented the first decline in any regional rate since 1962. In 1978 rates for the Northeast, North Central, and South Regions increased, as did the

national rate. The rate for the West Region, however, declined for the second consecutive year.

Information about the characteristics of divorces is available only from States that participate in the divorce-registration area (DRA). During 1971-77 the DRA included 29 States. California ceased to participate in 1978, and the DRA comprised 28 States in that year. The number of divorces granted in the DRA in 1978 was 541,344, or 48 percent of the national total.

For the DRA in 1978 the median duration of marriages ending in divorce remained unchanged from 1977. The median duration was 6.6 years in both 1977 and 1978, having increased slightly from the level of 6.5 years recorded in each year of the period 1974-76. In 1977 the median duration to divorce was slightly higher in California (7.0 years) than in the DRA as a whole. As a result, it is likely that the median

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duration for the DRA in 1978 was slightly lower than it would have been if California had continued to participate in the DRA in 1978.

According to data obtained from the DRA in 1978 on ages of divorcing spouses, the median age at time of decree was 32.0 years for husbands and 29.7 for wives.

The total number of children under 18 years of age involved in divorce is estimated annually for the United States, based on data reported by States in the DRA. The total estimated for 1978 was 1,147,000, representing a 4.7-percent increase over the total for 1977 (1,095,000). This increase in 1978 was a reversal of the decline that occurred in 1976 and in 1977. In 1977 the

average number of children per divorce was lower for California (0.91) than for the DRA as a whole (1.00). If California had continued to participate in the DRA in 1978, with the same percent distribution of divorces by number of children reported as was recorded in 1977, the national estimate of the number of children involved in divorce would have increased by about 2.6 percent instead of 4.7 percent. Therefore it appears that less than half of the 1978 increase in the number of children involved was due to the changing composition of the DRA.

The rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age relates the number of children involved in

Table 1. DIVORCES AND RATES: UNITED STATES, EACH REGION, DIVISION, AND STATE, 1976-78

[Data are counts of decrees granted (including reported annulments and dissolutions of marriage) supplied by States except as noted. Figures for the divorce-registration States differ slightly from those based on sample data shown in table 5. Rates per 1,000 population in each area estimated as of July 1, 1976, 1977, and 1978]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate			Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1978	1977	1976	1978	1977	1976		1978	1977	1976	1978	1977	1976
United States.....	1,130,000	¹ 1,091,000	1,083,000	5.2	¹ 5.0	5.0	West North Central:						
Regions:							Minnesota.....	14,393	14,020	⁴ 13,822	3.6	3.5	⁴ 3.5
Northeast.....	168,000	159,000	156,000	3.4	3.2	3.2	Iowa.....	11,123	10,890	10,817	3.8	3.8	3.8
North Central.....	286,000	271,000	273,000	4.9	4.7	4.7	Missouri.....	26,308	25,235	25,414	5.4	5.3	5.3
South.....	413,000	¹ 400,000	394,000	5.8	¹ 5.7	5.7	North Dakota.....	2,071	1,952	1,861	3.2	3.0	2.9
West.....	263,000	261,000	260,000	6.5	6.6	6.7	South Dakota.....	2,449	2,436	2,350	3.5	3.5	3.4
							Nebraska.....	6,066	6,112	5,862	3.9	3.9	3.8
							Kansas.....	12,668	12,629	12,833	5.4	5.4	5.6
Northeast:							South Atlantic:						
New England.....	45,368	44,363	43,722	3.7	3.6	3.6	Delaware.....	3,302	3,030	3,233	5.7	5.2	5.6
Middle Atlantic.....	122,879	114,164	112,576	3.3	3.1	3.0	Maryland.....	16,497	16,617	16,101	4.0	4.0	3.9
							District of Columbia.....	3,437	3,158	3,092	5.1	4.6	4.4
North Central:							Virginia.....	22,654	21,459	21,381	4.4	4.2	4.2
East North Central ² ..	211,002	197,254	199,938	5.1	4.8	4.9	West Virginia.....	9,698	9,605	8,893	5.2	5.2	4.9
West North Central....	75,078	73,274	72,959	4.4	4.3	4.3	North Carolina.....	26,558	25,013	24,327	4.8	4.5	4.4
							South Carolina.....	11,901	10,717	10,641	4.1	3.7	3.7
South:							Georgia.....	31,554	30,988	31,156	6.2	6.1	6.3
South Atlantic.....	191,432	182,957	182,047	5.5	5.3	5.4	Florida.....	65,831	62,370	63,223	7.6	7.4	7.5
East South Central....	² 80,543	79,467	79,328	² 5.8	5.7	5.8							
West South Central ² ..	141,416	136,203	132,309	6.4	*	6.2	East South Central:						
							Kentucky.....	² 13,759	15,530	16,027	² 3.9	4.5	4.7
West:							Tennessee.....	28,412	27,421	27,002	6.6	6.4	6.4
Mountain.....	78,229	77,278	75,534	7.5	7.7	7.7	Alabama.....	25,059	23,757	24,056	6.7	6.4	6.6
Pacific.....	184,606	183,426	184,888	6.2	6.3	6.4	Mississippi.....	13,313	12,759	12,243	5.5	5.3	5.2
							West South Central:						
New England:							Arkansas.....	19,964	² 19,222	² 18,365	9.2	² 9.0	² 8.7
Maine.....	6,192	5,671	5,540	5.7	5.2	5.2	Louisiana ²	13,229	12,910	12,550	3.3	*	3.3
New Hampshire.....	4,721	4,417	4,322	5.4	5.2	5.3	Oklahoma.....	22,439	21,806	21,489	7.9	7.8	7.8
Vermont.....	2,055	2,131	1,905	4.2	4.4	4.0	Texas.....	85,784	82,265	79,905	6.6	6.4	6.4
Massachusetts.....	16,160	16,492	16,974	2.8	2.9	2.9							
Rhode Island.....	3,475	3,420	3,276	3.7	3.7	3.5	Mountain:						
Connecticut.....	12,765	12,222	11,705	4.1	3.9	3.8	Montana.....	4,884	4,692	4,850	6.3	6.2	6.4
							Idaho.....	6,356	6,013	5,699	7.2	7.0	6.9
Middle Atlantic:							Wyoming.....	3,130	3,068	2,850	7.4	7.6	7.3
New York.....	58,043	55,803	54,229	3.3	3.1	3.0	Colorado.....	18,590	20,557	17,520	6.9	7.8	6.8
New Jersey.....	26,575	20,493	21,816	3.6	2.8	3.0	New Mexico.....	9,608	9,143	9,118	7.9	7.7	7.8
Pennsylvania.....	38,261	37,868	36,531	3.3	3.2	3.1	Arizona.....	17,320	16,578	19,029	7.3	7.2	8.4
							Utah.....	7,128	6,947	6,170	5.4	5.5	5.0
East North Central:							Nevada.....	11,213	10,280	10,298	16.8	16.2	16.9
Ohio.....	59,200	57,266	59,251	5.5	5.4	5.5	Pacific:						
Indiana ³	40,333	² 33,338	² 31,193	7.5	² 6.3	² 5.9	Washington.....	26,485	26,679	27,072	7.0	7.3	7.5
Illinois.....	50,311	48,980	51,810	4.5	4.4	4.6	Oregon.....	16,965	16,372	16,070	6.9	6.9	6.9
Michigan.....	45,029	43,036	43,101	4.9	4.7	4.7	California.....	132,850	132,193	133,824	6.0	6.0	6.2
Wisconsin.....	16,129	14,634	14,583	3.4	3.1	3.2	Alaska.....	3,469	3,581	3,210	8.4	8.8	8.4
							Hawaii.....	4,837	4,601	4,712	5.4	5.1	5.3

¹ Figures include estimates.
² Data are incomplete.
³ Data include divorce petitions filed for some counties.
⁴ Data are estimated.

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divorce in a given year to the total number of children under 18 in the population that year. In 1978 this rate was 18.1, more than twice the rate reported for 1965 and almost 3 times the rate for 1955.

Table 2. DIVORCES AND ANNULMENTS AND RATES: UNITED STATES, 1950-78

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

Year	Divorces and annulments	Rate per 1,000 ¹ —	
		Total population	Married women 15 years and over
1978.....	1,130,000	5.2	21.9
1977.....	1,091,000	5.0	21.1
1976.....	1,083,000	5.0	21.1
1975.....	1,036,000	4.9	20.3
1974.....	977,000	4.6	19.3
1973.....	915,000	4.4	18.2
1972.....	845,000	4.1	17.0
1971.....	773,000	3.7	15.8
1970.....	708,000	3.5	14.9
1969.....	639,000	3.2	13.4
1968.....	584,000	2.9	12.5
1967.....	523,000	2.6	11.2
1966.....	499,000	2.5	10.9
1965.....	479,000	2.5	10.6
1964.....	450,000	2.4	10.0
1963.....	428,000	2.3	9.6
1962.....	413,000	2.2	9.4
1961.....	414,000	2.3	9.6
1960.....	393,000	2.2	9.2
1959.....	395,000	2.2	9.3
1958.....	368,000	2.1	8.9
1957.....	381,000	2.2	9.2
1956.....	382,000	2.3	9.4
1955.....	377,000	2.3	9.3
1954.....	379,000	2.4	9.5
1953.....	390,000	2.5	9.9
1952.....	392,000	2.5	10.1
1951.....	381,000	2.5	9.9
1950.....	385,000	2.6	10.3

¹Data are based on population enumerated as of April 1 for 1950, 1960, and 1970, and estimated as of July 1 for all other years.

The statistics for the DRA presented in this report are based on sample data and consequently are subject to sampling variability. Further discussion of sampling variability appears in the Technical Notes.

Table 3. MEDIAN DURATION OF MARRIAGE PRIOR TO DIVORCE OR ANNULMENT: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1976-78

[Based on sample data. Medians computed on data by single years, excluding duration of marriage not stated. The divorce-registration area included 29 States in 1976 and 1977, and 28 States in 1978]

Area	Median duration of marriage		
	1978	1977	1976
Divorce-registration area.....	6.6	6.6	6.5
Alabama.....	4.9	4.9	4.8
Alaska.....	5.3	5.0	5.2
California.....	---	7.0	6.9
Connecticut.....	8.4	8.3	8.2
Georgia.....	5.6	5.3	5.3
Hawaii.....	5.5	5.7	5.4
Idaho.....	4.8	5.0	4.6
Illinois.....	6.3	6.2	6.1
Iowa.....	5.9	5.8	5.7
Kansas.....	5.0	5.2	5.0
Kentucky.....	5.8	5.6	5.6
Maryland.....	8.5	8.4	7.9
Michigan.....	7.0	7.0	6.6
Missouri.....	5.7	5.5	5.7
Montana.....	5.1	5.1	5.0
Nebraska.....	6.4	6.1	5.8
New York.....	8.3	8.1	7.9
Ohio.....	6.0	6.0	5.9
Oregon.....	6.2	6.0	6.0
Pennsylvania.....	7.7	7.7	7.8
Rhode Island.....	8.2	8.2	8.1
South Carolina.....	6.9	6.8	6.8
South Dakota.....	5.6	5.8	5.6
Tennessee.....	5.5	5.3	5.2
Utah.....	5.0	4.8	5.1
Vermont.....	7.7	7.8	7.6
Virginia.....	7.9	7.8	7.7
Wisconsin.....	7.1	7.0	7.2
Wyoming.....	4.7	4.6	4.3

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Table 4. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN DIVORCES AND ANNULMENTS, AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER DECREE, AND RATE PER 1,000 CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE: UNITED STATES, 1954-78

[Refers only to events occurring within the United States. For 1960-78 estimated from frequencies based on sample data; for all other years estimated from total counts. For estimating method see Technical Notes]

Year	Estimated number of children involved	Average number of children per decree	Rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age
1978.....	1,147,000	1.01	18.1
1977.....	1,095,000	1.00	17.0
1976.....	1,117,000	1.03	17.1
1975.....	1,123,000	1.08	16.9
1974.....	1,099,000	1.12	16.3
1973.....	1,079,000	1.17	15.8
1972.....	1,021,000	1.20	14.8
1971.....	946,000	1.22	13.6
1970.....	870,000	1.22	12.5
1969.....	840,000	1.31	11.9
1968.....	784,000	1.34	11.1
1967.....	701,000	1.34	9.9
1966.....	669,000	1.34	9.5
1965.....	630,000	1.32	8.9
1964.....	613,000	1.36	8.7
1963.....	562,000	1.31	8.2
1962.....	532,000	1.29	7.9
1961.....	516,000	1.25	7.8
1960.....	463,000	1.18	7.2
1959.....	468,000	1.18	7.5
1958.....	398,000	1.08	6.5
1957.....	379,000	0.99	6.4
1956.....	361,000	0.95	6.3
1955.....	347,000	0.92	6.3
1954.....	341,000	0.90	6.4

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-----	*

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Table 5. DIVORCES AND ANNULMENTS BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN REPORTED: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1978

[Based on sample data. Data relate to children under 18 years of age]

Area	All divorces and annulments	Number of children reported						
		None	1	2	3	4	5 or more	Not stated
Divorce-registration area.....	541,344	234,637	134,426	103,038	39,111	12,421	5,457	12,254
Alabama.....	25,140	10,200	5,430	3,960	1,510	360	190	3,490
Alaska.....	3,469	1,601	821	609	216	83	36	103
Connecticut.....	12,758	5,352	2,992	2,686	1,036	362	144	186
Georgia.....	31,550	15,360	7,730	5,400	1,970	550	190	350
Hawaii.....	4,832	2,200	1,172	950	302	140	64	4
Idaho ¹	6,356	2,846	1,504	1,212	498	136	80	80
Illinois.....	50,310	22,109	12,585	9,443	3,644	1,295	616	618
Iowa.....	11,118	4,436	2,780	2,450	888	274	108	182
Kansas.....	12,745	6,010	3,105	2,400	930	220	65	15
Kentucky.....	13,900	6,305	3,805	2,240	790	270	100	390
Maryland.....	16,500	7,130	4,500	2,830	1,015	300	95	630
Michigan.....	45,050	17,730	10,910	9,560	3,600	1,120	660	1,470
Missouri.....	26,368	12,245	6,868	4,772	1,662	529	238	54
Montana.....	4,886	2,062	1,214	978	412	128	50	42
Nebraska ¹	6,096	2,286	1,592	1,365	580	183	90	-
New York.....	58,043	26,076	13,794	10,948	4,323	1,444	575	883
Ohio.....	59,380	25,460	14,440	12,060	4,960	1,480	720	260
Oregon.....	16,970	6,860	3,950	3,480	1,020	255	75	1,330
Pennsylvania.....	38,400	15,290	10,040	7,480	2,960	1,060	390	1,180
Rhode Island.....	3,475	1,286	918	711	310	103	54	93
South Carolina.....	11,901	5,215	3,370	2,224	773	232	85	2
South Dakota.....	2,449	964	659	524	190	50	46	16
Tennessee.....	28,490	14,030	7,110	4,690	1,620	490	180	370
Utah.....	7,050	2,796	1,614	1,298	600	276	136	330
Vermont.....	2,048	806	479	450	185	88	32	8
Virginia.....	22,675	10,202	6,221	4,151	1,436	410	162	93
Wisconsin.....	16,255	6,380	4,045	3,535	1,475	525	250	45
Wyoming.....	3,130	1,400	778	632	206	58	26	30

¹Data are for number of children affected by decree.

This report represents summary tabulations from the final divorce statistics for 1978. More detailed tabulations for 1978 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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TECHNICAL NOTES

Place and Time of Occurrence

Divorces, including absolute divorces, annulments, and dissolutions of marriage, are shown in all tables by State where decree was granted, which is also the State of legal residence of the petitioner. The time of divorce is based on the date the decree was granted.

Sources of Data

Figures in tables 1 and 2 are based on totals of divorce decrees tabulated and reported by States and counties. Figures in tables 3 and 5 are based on data tabulated from State-coded data tapes and from probability samples of divorce records selected and coded in the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) from copies of the records sent in by States participating in the divorce-registration area (DRA). For 1971-77, 29 States participated. In 1978, the DRA comprised 28 States, as California ceased to participate in that year.

Figures in table 4 were estimated by using several methods. Estimates for 1954-59 were prepared on the assumption that the average number of children per decree for the Nation was identical with that for the reporting States. The figure for 1960 was based on a nationwide sample. Figures for 1961-78 were prepared by multiplying the national divorce total by the average number of children per decree found in the combined States with satisfactory reporting of the number of children. There were 16 such States in 1961-69, all 28 registration States in 1970, 29 registration States in 1971-77, and 28 registration States in 1978.

Divorce Samples

Sample data used to estimate the 1978 frequencies in table 5 and the frequencies used to compute median duration of marriage for 1976-78 in table 3 were selected by using five different sampling rates, including 5, 10, 20, 50, or 100 percent of the divorces granted in a State. Samples were selected only from the States that participated in the DRA. Eight States—Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, and Virginia—supplied State-coded data tapes of all their divorce records through the Cooperative

Health Statistics System, and 100 percent of these records were used by NCHS. In all other States, sampling rates depended on the size of the annual divorce total for each State. Alaska and South Dakota were the only States coded in NCHS with a 100-percent sampling rate.

Sampling errors are given in the table for the estimates which constitute 1, 10, 25, 50, 75, 90, and 99 percent of the annual divorce totals. These sampling errors are given for the DRA and each registration State for 1978 data and only for the DRA for 1976 and 1977 data.

SAMPLING ERROR OF ESTIMATED FREQUENCY EXPRESSED AS PERCENTAGE OF AREA TOTAL: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA, 1976-78 AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1978

[Figures for Alaska, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, and Virginia have no sampling errors in 1978 because all records were tabulated]

Area and year	Sampling error of estimated frequency expressed as percentage of area total			
	1 or 99	10 or 90	25 or 75	50
Divorce-registration area:				
1978 (28 States).....	172	519	749	865
1977 (29 States).....	232	698	1,008	1,164
1976 (29 States).....	207	624	900	1,040
Registration States, 1978:				
Alabama.....	47	142	206	237
Alaska.....	...	...	...	...
Connecticut.....	11	34	49	57
Georgia.....	53	160	231	266
Hawaii.....	7	21	30	35
Idaho.....	8	24	35	40
Illinois.....	...	...	...	...
Iowa.....	10	32	46	53
Kansas.....	22	67	97	112
Kentucky.....	23	70	101	117
Maryland.....	26	77	111	128
Michigan.....	63	191	276	318
Missouri.....	...	...	...	...
Montana.....	7	21	30	35
Nebraska.....	...	...	...	...
New York.....	...	...	...	...
Ohio.....	106	318	459	530
Oregon.....	26	78	113	130
Pennsylvania.....	58	176	254	293
Rhode Island.....	...	...	...	...
South Carolina.....	...	...	...	...
South Dakota.....	...	...	...	...
Tennessee.....	50	152	219	253
Utah.....	8	25	37	42
Vermont.....
Virginia.....
Wisconsin.....	25	76	110	127
Wyoming.....	6	17	24	28

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