

## Advance Report of Final Divorce Statistics, 1981

### Divorces and divorce rates

Divorces increased for the 19th consecutive year, rising from 1,189,000 in 1980 to 1,213,000 in 1981. The number of divorces in 1962, the year before this most recent increase began, was 413,000. By 1972 it had more than doubled, to 845,000, and then increased at a slower rate during the mid to late 1970's (table 1). According to provisional data, however, divorces dropped in 1982 for the first time in 20 years, to 1,180,000.

The divorce rate was 5.3 per 1,000 population in 1981, equaling the record set in 1979 after dipping to 5.2 in 1980. The divorce rate rose rapidly in the mid-1960's to early 1970's and more slowly during the late 1970's, peaking in 1979 and 1981 (figure 1). According to provisional data, it dropped from 5.3 in 1981 to 5.1 in 1982.

The long-term trend in the divorce rate has been upward. Starting at 0.3 per 1,000 population in 1867,<sup>1</sup> the first year for which divorce data were available, the rate increased seventeenfold to its current level.

As well as increasing nationally in 1981, the number of divorces increased in all regions except North Central and in all geographic divisions except East North Central.

Among States, California had the most divorces (133,578), 11 percent of the national total. Texas ranked second (101,856). Only four States had between 50,000 and 100,000 divorces (table 2). Vermont had the fewest (2,263).

Rates of divorce have long been observed to increase from the northeast to the southwest of the Nation. In 1981 the rate for the West Region (6.3 per 1,000 population) was 75 percent higher than the rate for the Northeast (3.6). During the 1970's divorce rates increased in all regions, but there was some convergence in regional differences. In 1971 the rate for the West (5.6) had been almost three times the rate for the Northeast (2.0).

<sup>1</sup>National Center for Health Statistics, A. Plateris: 100 years of marriage and divorce statistics, 1867-1967. *Vital and Health Statistics*. Series 21, No. 24. DHEW Pub. No. (HRA) 74-1902. Health Resources Administration. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, Dec. 1973.

While the number of divorces increased from 1980 to 1981 in three out of four regions, the rate of divorce rose in the Northeast and South Regions, stabilized in the West Region, and declined in the North Central Region. Among States, the rate ranged from a low of 3.3 per 1,000 population in Pennsylvania to highs of 8.5 in Wyoming and 17.6 in Nevada.

The information shown below about the characteristics of divorces and divorcing spouses is available only from States that participate in the divorce-registration area (DRA). In 1971 the DRA comprised 29 States; in 1980, 30 States; and in 1981, 31 States. Delaware joined the DRA in 1981. The number of divorces in the DRA in 1971 represented 60 percent of the national total; and in 1980 and 1981, 49 percent.

### Children involved in divorce

The number of children involved in divorces, like the number of divorces, increased between 1980 and 1981. The national estimate of children involved in divorce in 1981 was 1,180,000, 6,000 more than in the previous year, and almost as many as in the record year 1979 (1,181,000). The number increased by 55 percent from 1950 to 1960, by 88 percent from 1960 to 1970, and by 36 percent from 1970 to 1981 (table 3 and figure 2). Consequently, in 1981 nearly 1.2 million children joined the ranks of children living with a currently divorced mother or father. These children (more than 5 million) constituted 9 percent of all children under 18 years of age in the United States, according to reports from the Bureau of the Census.<sup>2</sup> The number of children living with a divorced parent is the net result of the addition of children affected by divorce in that year and the subtraction of children whose divorced parent has remarried and children who have passed their 18th birthday.

The rate of children involved in divorces per 1,000 children under 18 years of age was 18.7 in 1981. This means that 1

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census: Marital status and living arrangements: March 1981. *Current Population Reports*. Series P-20, No. 372. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, June 1982.

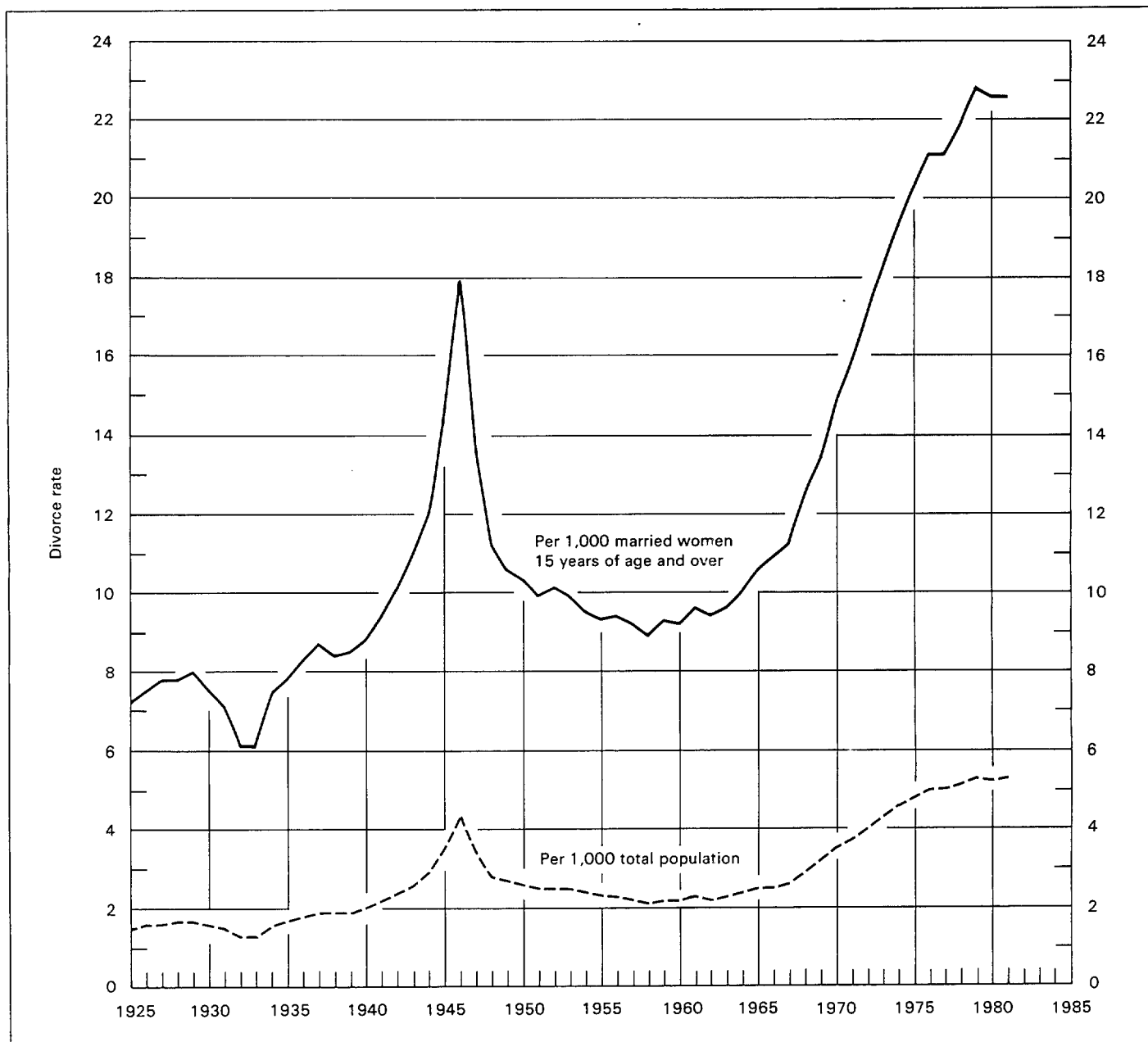


Figure 1. Divorce rates: United States, 1925-81

child out of 53 experienced the divorce of parents in that year. The rate almost tripled between 1950 (6.3) and 1981.

In 1981 the average number of children per divorce decree was 0.97, down 1 percent from 0.98 a year earlier. The average number of children per decree peaked at 1.36 in 1964, 7 years after the peak of the baby boom, and has generally fallen since then. Because families are smaller, the average number of children involved has been dropping while the number and rate per 1,000 children under 18 have been generally rising. Data from States participating in the DRA in 1981 show that 45 percent of divorces involved no children, 26 percent involved one child, 20 percent involved two children, and 9 percent involved three children or more (table 4). There was a 12-percent increase

over 1971 in the proportion of divorcing spouses with no children and a 43-percent decrease in the proportion with three children or more. Among States, the average number of children per decree ranged from 0.84 in Georgia to 1.21 in Utah. This variation is affected by differences in the percent of couples with no children, which was as low as 36 percent in Nebraska and as high as 50 percent in Georgia (table 5).

#### Duration of marriage

The median duration of marriage for couples divorcing in 1981 was 7.0 years compared with 6.8 in 1980 and 6.7 in 1971 (table 6). This measure, the median, means that half the

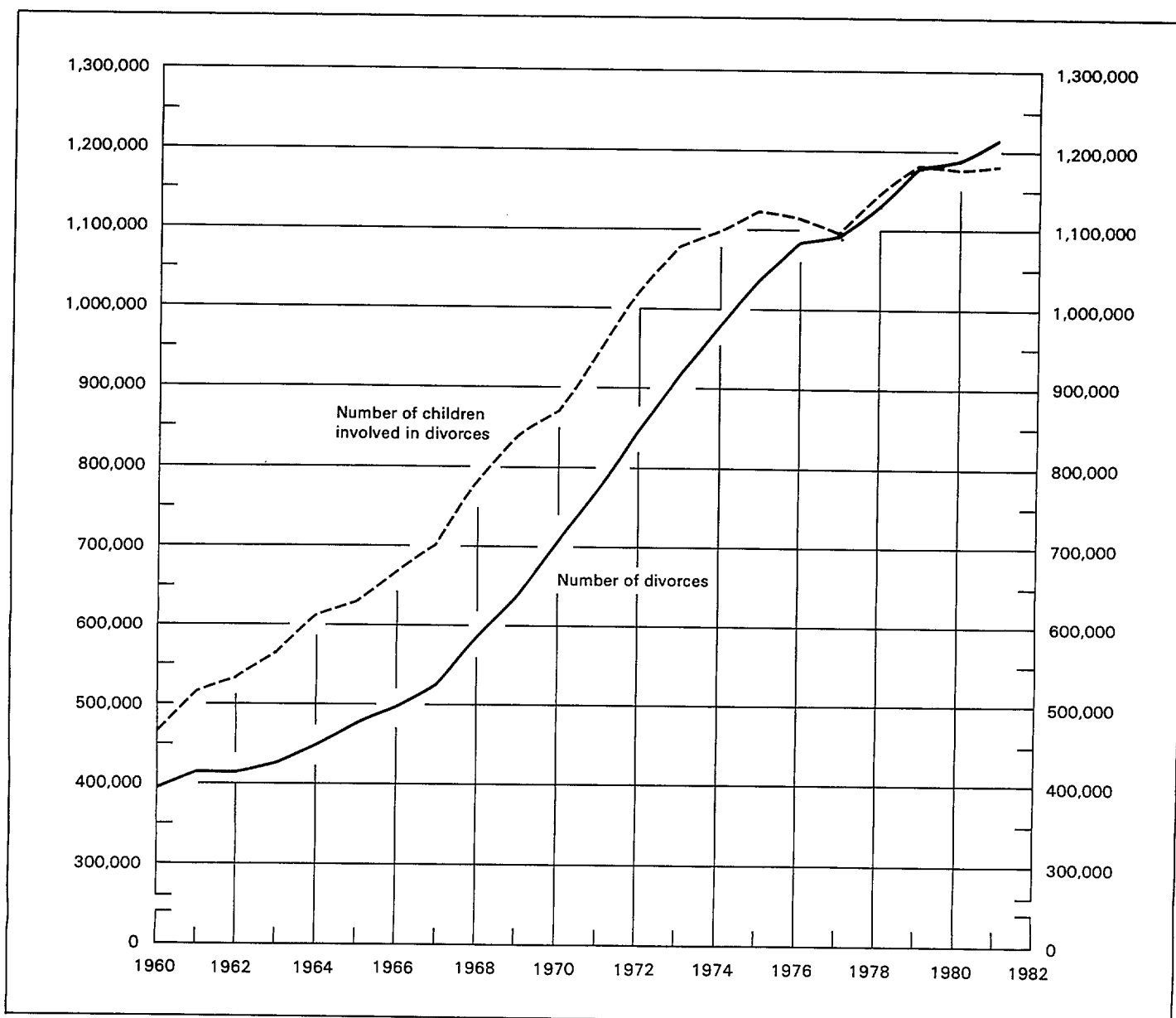


Figure 2. Divorces and children involved: United States, 1960-81

divorcing couples had been married less than 7.0 years and half had been married longer. It does not imply that there is a sudden rise in divorce at 7 years of marriage. In fact, divorces peaked at 2 years and declined gradually every year after.

The median duration ranged among States in the DRA from 5.0 years in Wyoming to 9.2 years in Massachusetts. Many factors affect duration and contribute to inter-State variation. Some of these factors are associated with personal characteristics of the spouses such as age at marriage and number of prior marriages. Quite separate from these personal factors are the procedural factors: Each State has its own laws governing divorce for its residents. The laws vary concerning residence requirements, waiting periods, and court proceedings. A move to standardize divorce laws during the 1970's reduced the variation in duration of marriage. In 1970 median duration to decree

varied among States in the DRA, from 4.6 years in Idaho and Wyoming to 9.3 years in New York. Thus, in 1970 there was a range of 4.7 years among reporting States; by 1981 this range had narrowed to 4.2 years.

Of couples divorcing in 1981, 4 percent had been married less than 1 year; 33 percent, 1-4 years; 27 percent, 5-9 years; 15 percent, 10-14 years; 9 percent, 15-19 years; and 11 percent, 20 years or more (table 7). In 1971 a slightly larger proportion (13 percent) of divorcing couples had been married 20 years or more.

### Age

Almost half of divorcing spouses were between 25 and 34 years of age (table 8). Twenty-two percent of wives and 13

percent of husbands were under 25, while 32 percent of wives and 42 percent of husbands were 35 years and older. It is often asked whether divorce is affecting more older couples now than in the past. Although divorce is more common at all ages now, men in age groups over 39 and women in age groups over 39 and under 60 constitute a smaller proportion of all divorcing persons in 1981 than in 1971 (table 8). Simultaneously, the proportions for ages 30–34 and 35–39 have increased.

The median age at divorce for both husbands and wives dipped in the mid-1970's and began to rise in 1979, until in 1981 both husbands and wives were divorcing at later ages than in 1971. Median ages of husbands and wives in 1981 were 33.1 and 30.6 years, respectively, compared with 32.9 and 29.8 in 1971. Unlike the dip and rise in age at decree, there was a general, gradual increase during the 1970's in the

ages at which divorcing spouses had been married. In 1971 the median ages at marriage were 23.0 years for divorcing husbands and 20.5 for divorcing wives; in 1981, the medians were 23.4 and 21.1, respectively (table 9).

### Rates for unmarried women

The divorce rate per 1,000 married women 15 years of age and older in the population was 22.6 in both 1980 and 1981. This means that between 1980 and 1981 divorces increased at the same pace as the population at risk, the married population. This rate had risen without interruption from 9.4 in 1962 to 21.1 in 1976. It leveled for a year and rose for 2 years, to a record high of 22.8 in 1979 (table 10).

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### Symbols

- Data not available
  - ... Category not applicable
  - Quantity zero
  - 0.0 Quantity more than zero but less than 0.05
  - Z Quantity more than zero but less than 500 where numbers are rounded to thousands
  - \* Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision
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**Table 1. Divorces and annulments and rates: United States, 1950-81**

[Data refer only to events occurring within the United States. Alaska included beginning 1959 and Hawaii beginning 1960. Rates per 1,000 population enumerated as of April 1 for census years and estimated as of July 1 for all other years]

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Rate</i>
1981	1,213,000	5.3
1980	1,189,000	5.2
1979	1,181,000	5.3
1978	1,130,000	5.1
1977	1,091,000	5.0
1976	1,083,000	5.0
1975	1,036,000	4.8
1974	977,000	4.6
1973	915,000	4.3
1972	845,000	4.0
1971	773,000	3.7
1970	708,000	3.5
1969	639,000	3.2
1968	584,000	2.9
1967	523,000	2.6
1966	499,000	2.5
1965	479,000	2.5
1964	450,000	2.4
1963	428,000	2.3
1962	413,000	2.2
1961	414,000	2.3
1960	393,000	2.2
1959	395,000	2.2
1958	368,000	2.1
1957	381,000	2.2
1956	382,000	2.3
1955	377,000	2.3
1954	379,000	2.4
1953	390,000	2.5
1952	392,000	2.5
1951	381,000	2.5
1950	385,000	2.6

Table 2. Divorces and divorce rates: United States, each region, division, and State, 1971, 1980, and 1981

[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 tables 4 and 5. Rates per 1,000 population in each area estimated as of July 1 for 1971 and 1981 and enumerated as of April 1 for 1980]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1981	1980	1971	1981	1980	1971
United States.....	1,213,000	1,189,000	1,773,000	15.3	5.2	13.7
Regions:						
Northeast.....	180,000	174,000	101,000	3.6	3.5	2.0
North Central.....	289,000	292,000	1204,000	4.9	5.0	13.6
South.....	1,465,000	449,000	269,000	16.1	6.0	4.2
West.....	1,279,000	274,000	1,199,000	16.3	6.3	15.6
Northeast:						
New England.....	50,430	49,049	29,755	4.1	4.0	2.5
Middle Atlantic.....	129,798	124,690	71,107	3.5	3.4	1.9
North Central:						
East North Central.....	2206,946	212,405	2145,305	25.0	5.1	*
West North Central.....	82,153	79,625	53,018	4.8	4.6	3.2
South:						
South Atlantic.....	213,930	206,344	119,938	5.7	5.6	3.8
East South Central.....	288,716	287,528	54,472	26.0	26.0	4.2
West South Central.....	2160,749	2155,025	94,375	*	26.5	4.8
West:						
Mountain.....	289,432	86,088	253,888	*	7.6	*
Pacific.....	188,576	187,900	143,640	5.8	5.9	5.3
New England:						
Maine.....	6,364	6,205	3,925	5.6	5.5	3.9
New Hampshire.....	5,248	5,254	2,941	5.6	5.7	3.9
Vermont.....	2,263	2,623	1,171	4.4	5.1	2.6
Massachusetts.....	19,502	17,873	12,881	3.4	3.1	2.2
Rhode Island.....	3,413	3,606	1,803	3.6	3.8	1.9
Connecticut.....	13,640	13,488	7,034	4.3	4.3	2.3
Middle Atlantic:						
New York.....	63,359	61,972	33,101	3.6	3.5	1.8
New Jersey.....	27,597	27,796	12,896	3.7	3.8	1.8
Pennsylvania.....	38,842	34,922	25,110	3.3	2.9	2.1
East North Central:						
Ohio.....	258,567	58,809	42,186	25.4	5.4	3.9
Indiana <sup>3</sup> .....	34,962	40,006	222,266	6.4	7.3	*
Illinois.....	51,789	50,997	40,136	4.5	4.5	3.6
Michigan.....	43,167	45,047	31,790	4.7	4.9	3.5
Wisconsin.....	18,461	17,546	8,927	3.9	3.7	2.0
West North Central:						
Minnesota.....	16,510	15,371	9,545	4.0	3.8	2.5
Iowa.....	12,071	11,854	7,772	4.1	4.1	2.7
Missouri.....	27,975	27,595	19,643	5.7	5.6	4.2
North Dakota.....	2,319	2,142	1,181	3.5	3.3	1.9
South Dakota.....	2,772	2,811	1,403	4.0	4.1	2.1
Nebraska.....	6,769	6,442	4,013	4.3	4.1	2.7
Kansas.....	13,737	13,410	9,461	5.8	5.7	4.2
South Atlantic:						
Delaware.....	2,996	2,313	1,830	5.0	3.9	3.2
Maryland.....	17,150	17,494	10,060	4.0	4.1	2.5
District of Columbia.....	3,896	4,682	2,629	6.2	7.3	3.5
Virginia.....	25,103	23,615	13,261	4.6	4.4	2.8
West Virginia.....	10,748	10,273	6,178	5.5	5.3	3.5
North Carolina.....	29,593	28,050	15,350	5.0	4.8	3.0
South Carolina.....	13,974	13,595	6,657	4.4	4.4	2.5
Georgia.....	35,205	34,743	20,245	6.3	6.4	4.3
Florida.....	75,265	71,579	43,728	7.4	7.3	6.1
East South Central:						
Kentucky.....	216,671	216,731	11,141	24.5	24.6	3.4
Tennessee.....	31,072	30,206	17,490	6.7	6.6	4.4
Alabama.....	26,791	26,745	16,905	6.8	6.9	4.8
Mississippi.....	14,182	13,846	8,936	5.6	5.5	3.9

See footnotes and note at end of table.

**Table 2. Divorces and divorce rates: United States, each region, division, and State, 1971, 1980, and 1981—Con.**

[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 tables 4 and 5. Rates per 1,000 population in each area estimated as of July 1 for 1971 and 1981 and enumerated as of April 1 for 1980]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1981	1980	1971	1981	1980	1971
<b>West South Central:</b>						
Arkansas .....	16,492	215,882	412,959	7.2	26.9	46.6
Louisiana .....	217,397	218,108	9,431	*	24.3	2.5
Oklahoma .....	25,004	24,226	16,417	8.1	8.0	6.3
Texas .....	101,856	96,809	55,568	6.9	6.8	4.8
<b>Mountain:</b>						
Montana .....	5,004	4,940	3,366	6.3	6.3	4.7
Idaho .....	6,728	6,596	3,664	7.0	7.0	5.0
Wyoming .....	4,145	4,003	1,988	8.5	8.5	5.8
Colorado .....	19,515	18,571	11,809	6.6	6.4	5.1
New Mexico .....	2,310,219	10,426	2,34,580	*	8.0	*
Arizona .....	20,819	19,908	314,588	7.5	7.3	37.7
Utah .....	8,077	7,802	4,419	5.3	5.3	4.0
Nevada .....	14,925	13,842	9,474	17.6	17.3	18.2
<b>Pacific:</b>						
Washington .....	29,511	28,642	19,207	7.0	6.9	5.6
Oregon .....	17,777	17,762	10,687	6.7	6.7	5.0
California .....	133,578	133,541	108,309	5.5	5.6	5.3
Alaska .....	3,457	3,517	1,746	8.3	8.8	5.5
Hawaii .....	4,253	4,438	3,691	4.3	4.6	4.6

<sup>1</sup>Figure includes estimate.

<sup>2</sup>Data are incomplete.

<sup>3</sup>Data include divorce petitions filed for some counties.

<sup>4</sup>Includes dismissals and legal separations.

NOTE: Rates for 1971 have been revised; see Technical notes.

**Table 3. 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, 1950-81**

[Data refer to children under 18 years of age and only to events occurring within the United States. For 1960-81, estimated from frequencies based on sample data; for all other years, estimated from total counts. For estimating method see Technical notes. Population enumerated as of April 1 for census years and estimated as of July 1 for all other years]

Year	Estimated number of children involved	Average number of children per decree	Rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age	Year	Estimated number of children involved	Average number of children per decree	Rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age
1981 .....	1,180,000	0.97	18.7	1965 .....	630,000	1.32	8.9
1980 .....	1,174,000	0.98	17.3	1964 .....	613,000	1.36	8.7
1979 .....	1,181,000	1.00	18.4	1963 .....	562,000	1.31	8.2
1978 .....	1,147,000	1.01	17.7	1962 .....	532,000	1.29	7.9
1977 .....	1,095,000	1.00	16.7	1961 .....	516,000	1.25	7.8
1976 .....	1,117,000	1.03	16.9	1960 .....	463,000	1.18	7.2
1975 .....	1,123,000	1.08	16.7	1959 .....	468,000	1.18	7.5
1974 .....	1,099,000	1.12	16.2	1958 .....	398,000	1.08	6.5
1973 .....	1,079,000	1.17	15.7	1957 .....	379,000	0.99	6.4
1972 .....	1,021,000	1.20	14.7	1956 .....	361,000	0.95	6.3
1971 .....	946,000	1.22	13.6	1955 .....	347,000	0.92	6.3
1970 .....	870,000	1.22	12.5	1954 .....	341,000	0.90	6.4
1969 .....	840,000	1.31	11.9	1953 .....	330,000	0.85	6.4
1968 .....	784,000	1.34	11.1	1952 .....	318,000	0.81	6.2
1967 .....	701,000	1.34	9.9	1951 .....	304,000	0.80	6.1
1966 .....	669,000	1.34	9.5	1950 .....	299,000	0.78	6.3

Table 4. Number of divorces and annulments and percent distribution by number of children under 18 years of age involved: Divorce-registration area and each registration State, 1981

[Based on sample data]

Area	All divorces and annulments Number	Number of children under 18 years of age involved						
		Total	None	1	2	3	4	5 or more
		Percent distribution						
Divorce-registration area . . . . .	600,707	100.0	44.8	25.7	20.3	6.7	1.8	0.7
Alabama . . . . .	26,890	100.0	45.1	26.6	20.0	6.0	1.4	0.8
Alaska . . . . .	3,458	100.0	46.2	25.9	19.3	6.1	2.1	0.5
Connecticut . . . . .	13,296	100.0	44.2	24.4	21.5	7.3	2.0	0.6
Delaware . . . . .	2,995	100.0	42.9	28.6	20.4	6.0	1.4	0.8
Georgia . . . . .	35,220	100.0	49.5	25.9	17.7	5.1	1.2	0.6
Hawaii . . . . .	4,254	100.0	46.1	23.9	19.3	7.2	2.4	1.1
Idaho <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	6,780	100.0	46.1	23.3	20.8	6.9	2.0	0.8
Illinois . . . . .	51,783	100.0	44.9	25.4	19.9	6.9	2.0	0.8
Iowa . . . . .	12,068	100.0	39.5	25.5	23.5	8.9	1.9	0.8
Kansas . . . . .	14,140	100.0	42.5	26.3	21.4	7.1	2.0	0.7
Kentucky . . . . .	16,725	100.0	45.1	27.3	18.5	6.5	2.0	0.6
Maryland . . . . .	17,005	100.0	47.3	27.8	18.6	5.0	1.0	0.3
Massachusetts . . . . .	19,780	100.0	40.6	23.5	23.9	8.4	2.6	1.0
Michigan . . . . .	43,180	100.0	42.2	24.4	22.6	8.0	2.1	0.7
Missouri . . . . .	27,975	100.0	46.5	26.5	18.9	6.0	1.7	0.5
Montana . . . . .	5,012	100.0	45.1	23.2	22.2	6.7	1.9	0.9
Nebraska . . . . .	6,823	100.0	36.2	26.6	24.5	9.5	2.5	0.8
New Hampshire . . . . .	5,281	100.0	40.9	24.6	23.9	7.8	2.1	0.6
New York . . . . .	63,246	100.0	48.2	23.9	19.0	6.6	1.7	0.6
Ohio . . . . .	58,640	100.0	44.3	25.3	20.9	6.7	2.0	0.8
Oregon . . . . .	18,030	100.0	45.2	25.5	21.8	6.2	1.2	0.2
Pennsylvania . . . . .	38,840	100.0	45.6	26.0	19.4	6.8	1.6	0.5
Rhode Island . . . . .	3,413	100.0	39.8	26.7	22.8	7.9	2.0	0.8
South Carolina . . . . .	13,974	100.0	45.7	27.5	18.9	5.9	1.4	0.6
South Dakota . . . . .	2,773	100.0	39.6	27.5	21.8	7.2	3.0	0.9
Tennessee . . . . .	31,100	100.0	47.1	28.8	17.4	5.6	0.9	0.3
Utah . . . . .	8,080	100.0	39.2	24.4	21.1	9.2	3.9	2.2
Vermont . . . . .	2,263	100.0	38.9	24.6	24.4	8.1	2.8	1.2
Virginia . . . . .	25,053	100.0	46.2	27.7	18.8	5.5	1.3	0.5
Wisconsin . . . . .	18,485	100.0	37.8	25.9	23.4	9.0	2.8	1.1
Wyoming . . . . .	4,145	100.0	42.8	26.2	21.3	7.2	1.9	0.5

<sup>1</sup>This State reports number of children affected by decree.



**Table 5. Number of divorces and annulments, 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: Divorce-registration area and each registration State, 1981**

[Refers to children under 18 years of age. Estimated from frequencies based on sample data]

Area	All divorces and annulments	Estimated number of children involved	Average number of children per decree	Rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age	Area	All divorces and annulments	Estimated number of children involved	Average number of children per decree	Rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age
Alabama . . . . .	26,890	25,621	0.95	22.4	Montana . . . . .	5,012	5,036	1.00	21.8
Alaska . . . . .	3,458	3,238	0.93	24.2	Nebraska . . . . .	6,823	8,084	1.18	18.3
Connecticut . . . . .	13,296	13,396	1.00	16.7	New Hampshire . . . . .	5,281	5,675	1.07	22.2
Delaware . . . . .	2,995	2,904	0.96	18.0	New York . . . . .	63,246	58,127	0.91	12.7
Georgia . . . . .	35,220	29,906	0.84	18.2	Ohio . . . . .	58,640	58,197	0.99	19.2
Hawaii . . . . .	4,254	4,239	0.99	15.4	Oregon . . . . .	18,030	16,907	0.93	23.4
Idaho <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	6,780	6,647	0.98	21.5	Pennsylvania . . . . .	38,840	36,657	0.94	12.0
Illinois . . . . .	51,783	51,083	0.98	16.0	Rhode Island . . . . .	3,413	3,696	1.08	15.5
Iowa . . . . .	12,068	13,401	1.11	16.5	South Carolina . . . . .	13,974	12,853	0.91	13.8
Kansas . . . . .	14,140	14,457	1.02	22.4	South Dakota . . . . .	2,773	3,034	1.09	15.0
Kentucky . . . . .	16,725	15,884	0.94	15.0	Tennessee . . . . .	31,100	26,575	0.85	20.8
Maryland . . . . .	17,005	14,627	0.86	12.8	Utah . . . . .	8,080	9,835	1.21	17.5
Massachusetts . . . . .	19,780	22,284	1.12	15.4	Vermont . . . . .	2,263	2,602	1.14	18.3
Michigan . . . . .	43,180	45,631	1.05	17.1	Virginia . . . . .	25,053	22,454	0.89	15.5
					Wisconsin . . . . .	18,485	21,598	1.16	16.2
					Wyoming . . . . .	4,145	4,185	1.00	27.7

<sup>1</sup>This State reports number of children affected by decree.

**Table 6. Median duration of marriage to decree: Divorce-registration area and each registration State, 1971, 1980, and 1981**

[Based on sample data. Medians computed on data by single years. The divorce-registration area included 29 States in 1971, 30 States in 1980, and 31 States in 1981]

Area	Median duration of marriage in years			Area	Median duration of marriage in years		
	1981	1980	1971		1981	1980	1971
Divorce-registration area . . . . .	7.0	6.8	6.7	Missouri . . . . .	5.8	5.8	5.5
Alabama . . . . .	5.5	4.9	5.4	Montana . . . . .	5.3	5.7	5.3
Alaska . . . . .	5.6	5.3	5.2	Nebraska . . . . .	6.8	6.7	6.2
California . . . . .	---	---	6.9	New Hampshire . . . . .	7.6	7.4	---
Connecticut . . . . .	8.3	8.4	8.7	New York . . . . .	8.4	8.4	9.3
Delaware . . . . .	7.6	---	---	Ohio . . . . .	6.2	6.1	6.5
Georgia . . . . .	5.5	5.4	5.3	Oregon . . . . .	6.1	6.1	5.7
Hawaii . . . . .	6.1	6.2	6.8	Pennsylvania . . . . .	8.5	8.3	7.6
Idaho . . . . .	5.2	5.1	5.0	Rhode Island . . . . .	8.0	8.1	8.7
Illinois . . . . .	6.5	6.5	6.4	South Carolina . . . . .	7.4	7.1	7.1
Iowa . . . . .	6.5	6.2	5.8	South Dakota . . . . .	6.4	5.8	5.8
Kansas . . . . .	5.3	5.2	5.1	Tennessee . . . . .	5.6	5.4	5.5
Kentucky . . . . .	6.1	6.0	5.7	Utah . . . . .	5.1	5.0	4.7
Maryland . . . . .	8.9	8.8	8.6	Vermont . . . . .	8.1	8.4	9.1
Massachusetts . . . . .	9.2	8.9	---	Virginia . . . . .	8.3	8.2	8.3
Michigan . . . . .	7.5	6.9	6.9	Wisconsin . . . . .	7.7	7.4	7.7
				Wyoming . . . . .	5.0	4.8	4.9

**Table 7. Percent distribution of divorces and annulments by duration of marriage to decree: Divorce-registration area and each registration State, 1981**

[Based on sample data]

Area	Duration of marriage						
	Total	Under 1 year	1-4 years	5-9. years	10-14 years	15-19 years	20 years or more
Divorce-registration area .....	100.0	4.3	33.4	27.3	15.3	8.5	11.1
Alabama .....	100.0	10.5	36.5	23.4	13.5	7.0	9.1
Alaska .....	100.0	6.3	39.8	27.6	13.5	5.7	7.1
Connecticut .....	100.0	1.7	29.1	27.0	17.2	10.4	14.7
Delaware .....	100.0	3.0	31.0	28.2	16.9	9.6	11.3
Georgia .....	100.0	8.2	38.6	24.5	13.3	6.8	8.6
Hawaii .....	100.0	3.8	37.9	30.9	13.9	6.6	6.9
Idaho .....	100.0	8.9	39.9	25.3	12.0	6.7	7.1
Illinois .....	100.0	4.7	35.5	27.0	14.5	8.2	10.2
Iowa .....	100.0	4.1	36.1	26.9	14.8	7.7	10.4
Kansas .....	100.0	7.6	40.3	23.8	13.4	6.9	8.0
Kentucky .....	100.0	6.0	36.7	25.6	15.0	7.9	8.9
Maryland .....	100.0	0.3	24.5	31.8	19.6	10.4	13.3
Massachusetts .....	100.0	0.3	22.0	31.7	19.7	10.8	15.4
Michigan .....	100.0	3.3	32.5	26.7	15.9	10.0	11.6
Missouri .....	100.0	6.4	38.3	25.2	13.2	7.2	9.7
Montana .....	100.0	7.5	40.2	24.9	11.4	6.8	9.2
Nebraska .....	100.0	3.2	34.5	28.6	14.4	8.0	11.2
New Hampshire .....	100.0	2.2	31.6	27.9	17.2	9.6	11.5
New York .....	100.0	2.0	27.2	28.7	17.6	10.2	14.3
Ohio .....	100.0	5.8	36.4	26.4	13.6	8.2	9.7
Oregon .....	100.0	3.8	37.7	28.2	14.6	7.1	8.6
Pennsylvania .....	100.0	1.5	27.4	29.4	16.3	9.3	16.2
Rhode Island .....	100.0	0.8	29.5	29.6	15.9	9.8	14.4
South Carolina .....	100.0	2.7	32.1	29.1	16.7	8.6	10.9
South Dakota .....	100.0	5.4	35.8	26.7	13.1	7.4	11.6
Tennessee .....	100.0	6.9	39.0	25.0	13.7	7.6	7.8
Utah .....	100.0	6.9	42.2	25.6	12.8	5.1	7.4
Vermont .....	100.0	0.4	28.7	30.1	18.8	9.3	12.6
Virginia .....	100.0	0.3	27.5	31.0	18.1	10.3	12.9
Wisconsin .....	100.0	2.0	31.1	29.3	16.2	8.5	12.9
Wyoming .....	100.0	7.7	42.6	24.8	12.1	6.0	6.7

**Table 8. Percent distribution of divorces and annulments by age of husband and by age of wife at time of decree, and median age of husband and wife: Divorce-registration area, 1971-81**

[Based on sample data]

<i>Age of husband and wife at time of decree</i>	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971
<b>Husband</b>											
	Percent distribution										
All ages . . . . .	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20 years . . . . .	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0
20-24 years . . . . .	12.3	13.5	13.9	14.8	14.7	15.1	15.2	15.7	15.7	15.9	16.8
25-29 years . . . . .	22.6	23.4	23.8	24.3	24.0	24.8	25.1	24.2	23.4	23.5	22.1
30-34 years . . . . .	21.8	21.4	20.8	20.2	19.8	18.6	18.6	18.2	17.9	17.2	16.3
35-39 years . . . . .	14.9	14.6	14.2	13.8	13.4	12.9	12.5	12.4	12.4	12.3	12.8
40-44 years . . . . .	9.9	9.8	9.7	9.3	9.4	9.5	9.3	9.6	9.9	10.2	10.6
45-49 years . . . . .	6.6	6.5	6.7	6.6	6.9	7.2	7.3	7.5	8.0	8.0	8.4
50-54 years . . . . .	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.8	4.9	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.5	5.5
55-59 years . . . . .	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.8	3.0	3.0	3.2
60-64 years . . . . .	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
65 years and over . . . . .	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Median <sup>1</sup>										
Age in years . . . . .	33.1	32.7	32.5	32.0	32.4	32.3	32.2	32.2	32.4	32.6	32.9
<b>Wife</b>											
	Percent distribution										
All ages . . . . .	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20 years . . . . .	2.9	3.4	3.6	4.0	3.8	4.1	4.4	4.6	4.4	4.3	4.4
20-24 years . . . . .	19.2	20.8	21.2	22.7	22.3	22.4	22.5	23.0	23.1	23.7	24.9
25-29 years . . . . .	24.5	24.6	24.8	24.6	24.5	25.1	25.2	24.3	23.7	23.0	21.3
30-34 years . . . . .	20.0	19.4	18.7	17.9	17.9	16.7	16.3	16.1	15.6	15.0	14.8
35-39 years . . . . .	12.9	12.8	12.3	11.8	11.3	11.2	10.9	10.7	10.9	11.0	11.1
40-44 years . . . . .	8.1	7.7	7.9	7.5	7.7	7.9	7.6	7.9	8.4	8.8	8.9
45-49 years . . . . .	4.8	4.8	5.0	5.0	5.3	5.6	5.7	5.9	6.3	6.6	6.8
50-54 years . . . . .	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.9	3.9	4.0
55-59 years . . . . .	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.7	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
60-64 years . . . . .	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9
65 years and over . . . . .	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.8
	Median <sup>1</sup>										
Age in years . . . . .	30.6	30.3	30.1	29.7	29.9	29.7	29.5	29.5	29.7	29.8	29.8

<sup>1</sup>Medians computed on data by single years of age.

**Table 9. Percent distribution of divorces and annulments by age of husband and by age of wife at time of marriage, and median age of husband and wife: Divorce-registration area, 1971-81**

[Based on sample data]

<i>Age of husband and wife at time of marriage</i>	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971
<b>Husband</b>											
	Percent distribution										
All ages .....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20 years .....	17.0	18.0	18.4	19.3	18.6	18.9	19.1	19.5	19.3	19.3	19.0
20-24 years .....	44.0	44.0	44.3	44.7	44.5	44.4	44.8	44.6	44.8	44.5	44.5
25-29 years .....	18.7	18.4	18.0	17.5	17.4	17.3	17.1	16.7	16.4	16.7	16.4
30-34 years .....	8.6	8.1	7.9	7.4	7.6	7.4	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.2	7.5
35-39 years .....	4.6	4.5	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.5
40-44 years .....	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0
45 years and over .....	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.8	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Median <sup>1</sup>										
Age in years .....	23.4	23.3	23.2	23.0	23.1	23.1	23.0	23.0	22.9	23.0	23.0
<b>Wife</b>											
	Percent distribution										
All ages .....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20 years .....	38.3	39.9	41.0	42.8	42.2	42.5	43.3	43.8	44.5	44.6	45.3
20-24 years .....	35.9	35.5	35.1	34.2	34.0	33.8	33.7	33.3	32.8	32.4	31.4
25-29 years .....	12.1	11.4	11.0	10.5	10.7	10.3	9.9	9.9	9.4	9.3	9.5
30-34 years .....	5.8	5.6	5.4	5.0	5.2	5.2	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.9
35-39 years .....	3.2	3.1	3.1	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.0	2.9	3.1	3.2	3.2
40-44 years .....	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.3	2.2
45 years and over .....	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.7	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.4
	Median <sup>1</sup>										
Age in years .....	21.1	20.9	20.9	20.7	20.7	20.7	20.6	20.6	20.5	20.5	20.5

<sup>1</sup>Medians computed on data by single years of age.

**Table 10. Divorce rates per 1,000 married women 15 years of age and over: United States, 1950-81**

[Data refer only to events occurring within the United States. Alaska included beginning 1959 and Hawaii beginning 1960. Rates are based on populations enumerated as of April 1 for census years and estimated as of July 1 for all other years]

<i>Year</i>	<i>Rate per 1,000 married women</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Rate per 1,000 married women</i>
1981.....	22.6	1965.....	10.6
1980.....	22.6	1964.....	10.0
1979.....	22.8	1963.....	9.6
1978.....	21.9	1962.....	9.4
1977.....	21.1	1961.....	9.6
1976.....	21.1	1960.....	9.2
1975.....	20.3	1959.....	9.3
1974.....	19.3	1958.....	8.9
1973.....	18.2	1957.....	9.2
1972.....	17.0	1956.....	9.4
1971.....	15.8	1955.....	9.3
1970.....	14.9	1954.....	9.5
1969.....	13.4	1953.....	9.9
1968.....	12.5	1952.....	10.1
1967.....	11.2	1951.....	9.9
1966.....	10.9	1950.....	10.3

## 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

#### Nationwide counts

Figures in tables 1, 2, 3, and 10 are based on totals of divorce decrees granted (unless otherwise noted) supplied by States and counties to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) annually.

#### Data based on sample

Information about the characteristics of divorces and divorcing spouses are available only from States that participate in the divorce-registration area (DRA). Figures in tables 4-9 are based on data tabulated from State-coded data tapes and from probability samples of divorce records selected and coded at NCHS from copies of the records sent in by States participating in the DRA. In 1971-77, 29 States participated in the DRA; in 1978, 28 States; in 1979-80, 30 States; and in 1981, with the addition of Delaware, 31 States participated. Divorces in States constituting the DRA accounted for 49 percent of the national total in 1981.

### Divorce sample

Sample data used to compute data shown in tables 4-9 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 Vital Statistics Cooperative Program, 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. Sampling rates were selected so that the expected sample for each DRA State would contain at least 2,500 records. Alaska, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Wyoming were coded at NCHS with a 100-percent sampling rate.

Sampling errors are given in the table for the estimates that 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 1981 data and only for the DRA for 1971 and 1980 data.

Figures in table 3 were estimated on the assumption that the average number of children per decree was the same nationally as in reporting States. The average was based on reporting

### Sampling error of estimated percent: Divorce-registration area, 1971, 1980, and 1981, and each registration State, 1981

[Figures for Alaska, Delaware, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming have no sampling errors in 1981 because all records were tabulated]

Area and year	Sampling error of estimated percent			
	1 or 99	10 or 90	25 or 75	50
Divorce-registration area				
1981 (31 States).....	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
1980 (30 States).....	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2
1971 (29 States).....	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2
Registration States, 1981				
Alabama.....	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.9
Alaska.....	...	...	...	...
Connecticut.....	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.5
Delaware.....	...	...	...	...
Georgia.....	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Hawaii.....	0.1	0.5	0.7	0.8
Idaho.....	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.6
Illinois.....	...	...	...	...
Iowa.....	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.5
Kansas.....	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Kentucky.....	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Maryland.....	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Massachusetts.....	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.7
Michigan.....	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.7
Missouri.....	...	...	...	...
Montana.....	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.7
Nebraska.....	...	...	...	...
New Hampshire.....	...	...	...	...
New York.....	...	...	...	...
Ohio.....	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.9
Oregon.....	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.7
Pennsylvania.....	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Rhode Island.....	...	...	...	...
South Carolina.....	...	...	...	...
South Dakota.....	...	...	...	...
Tennessee.....	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Utah.....	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.6
Vermont.....	...	...	...	...
Virginia.....	...	...	...	...
Wisconsin.....	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.7
Wyoming.....	...	...	...	...

HOW TO USE SAMPLING ERROR TABLE: For estimated percents shown in tables 4 and 7-9, find the column closest to that percent to determine the sampling error. For example, in 1981, an estimated 25.7 percent of divorcing couples in the divorce-registration area had one child. In the cell formed by column "25 or 75" and the row "1981 (31 States)" is the figure 0.1. Thus, chances are 68 out of 100 that the actual percent of couples with one child is between 25.6 and 25.8 (25.7 ± 0.1).

States in 1950-59, a nationwide sample in 1960, 16 States in 1961-69, and all registration States thereafter. This average was multiplied by the national divorce total to estimate the national total number of children involved in divorce.

### Population denominators

Divorce rates for 1981 are based on populations estimated as of July 1, 1981. Divorce rates for 1980 are based on the population enumerated in the 1980 census. Rates for 1971-79

have been revised to be consistent with the 1980 rates based on the 1980 census and may differ from rates shown in the Advance Reports for 1979 and earlier years. Rates for 1971-79 have been recomputed for all categories shown for which revised populations are available. Rates for married women 15 years of age and over, shown in table 10, were not recomputed because revised population estimates were not available for the intercensal years.

### **Computation of percent distributions and medians**

Figures for number of children not stated and age not stated were subtracted from figures for total divorces used as denominators before percent distributions and medians were computed. Computations of median age at marriage and median age at decree were based on tabulations of ungrouped data.

This report represents summary tabulations from the final divorce statistics for 1981. More detailed tabulations for 1981 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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