

Advance Report of Final Divorce Statistics, 1983

Divorces and divorce rates

Divorces declined for the second consecutive year in 1983 when 1,158,000 couples divorced, 12,000 fewer than in 1982 (table 1). Between 1962 and 1981 the number of divorces almost tripled. Divorces reached a historic high of 1,213,000 in 1981 and then dropped 4 percent in 1982 and 1 percent in 1983; the drop in 1982 was the first decline in 20 years. According to provisional reports the decline continued in 1984.

For 1983, the divorce rate per 1,000 population was 4.9, down from 5.0 in 1982 and the historic high level of 5.3 in 1979 and 1981. The rate per 1,000 population has not been lower since 1975. The rate of divorce calculated per 1,000 married women 15 years of age and over was 21.3, representing the second consecutive annual drop from the rate of 22.6 in 1981. This type of rate, based on the population (married women) truly at risk of divorce, has been greater than 20 since 1975. This means that about 2 percent of the married women divorce annually.

Geographic variation in the numbers and rates of divorce are shown in table 2. Typically, the divorce rate is considerably lower in the Northeast Region than in the Midwest and both rates are considerably lower than rates in the South and West. In 1983 the divorce rate was 3.6 in the Northeast, 4.6 in the Midwest, 5.6 in the South, and 5.8 in the West. Among the 46 States and the District of Columbia for which data were complete in 1983, divorce rates ranged from a low of 3.2 per 1,000 population in Massachusetts to highs of 8.1 in Alaska, 8.5 in New Mexico, and 15.0 in Nevada.

Among the 45 States and the District of Columbia for which data were complete in both 1982 and 1983, Massachusetts replaced North Dakota as the State with the lowest rate in 1983 but in both 1982 and 1983 North Dakota, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts had the three lowest rates. The six States with highest rates in 1982 and 1983, in descending order, were Nevada, Alaska, Wyoming, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Florida. Divorce rates dropped in 29 States and the District of Columbia, were unchanged in 6 States, and rose in 10 States.

The greatest increase in the rate was reported for Hawaii, where the rate rose from 4.2 in 1982 to 4.5 in 1983. In spite of the increase, the rate for Hawaii was below the national average in 1983 in contrast to its level in 1973 (4.9), when it was well above the national rate (4.3). Only six of the States with complete data had lower rates in 1983 than in 1973 (California, Florida, Hawaii, Michigan, Nevada, and Oklahoma). The rates for all other reporting States were 2 to 48 percent higher in 1983 than they had been a decade earlier.

Numbers of divorces are obtained annually from all States and the District of Columbia; these data are shown in tables 1 and 2. Detailed information about characteristics of husbands and wives, as well as about the characteristics of the divorce, is reported by the 31 States in the divorce-registration area (DRA), which accounted for 50 percent of all divorces in the United States in 1983. It is from these States that number of children, ages of spouses, and duration of marriage can be ascertained.

Children involved in divorce

The 1,158,000 couples that divorced in 1983 were parents of an estimated 1,091,000 children under 18 years of age who were involved in those divorces. This was 2 percent fewer than the number of children involved in divorce in 1982. The average number of children per decree was the same in both years, 0.94 per decree, and lower than it has been since 1956 (table 3). For every 1,000 children under 18 years of age, 17.4 were involved in divorce during 1983. This rate represents a drop from 17.6 in 1982 and from a historic high of 18.7 in 1981.

In 1983 as in 1982, 46 percent of couples divorcing had no children under 18 years of age, 26 percent had one child, 20 percent had two children, and 9 percent had three or more children (table 4).

The average number of children per decree and the rate per 1,000 children under 18 are shown in table 5 for the DRA and each registration State. The average number of children

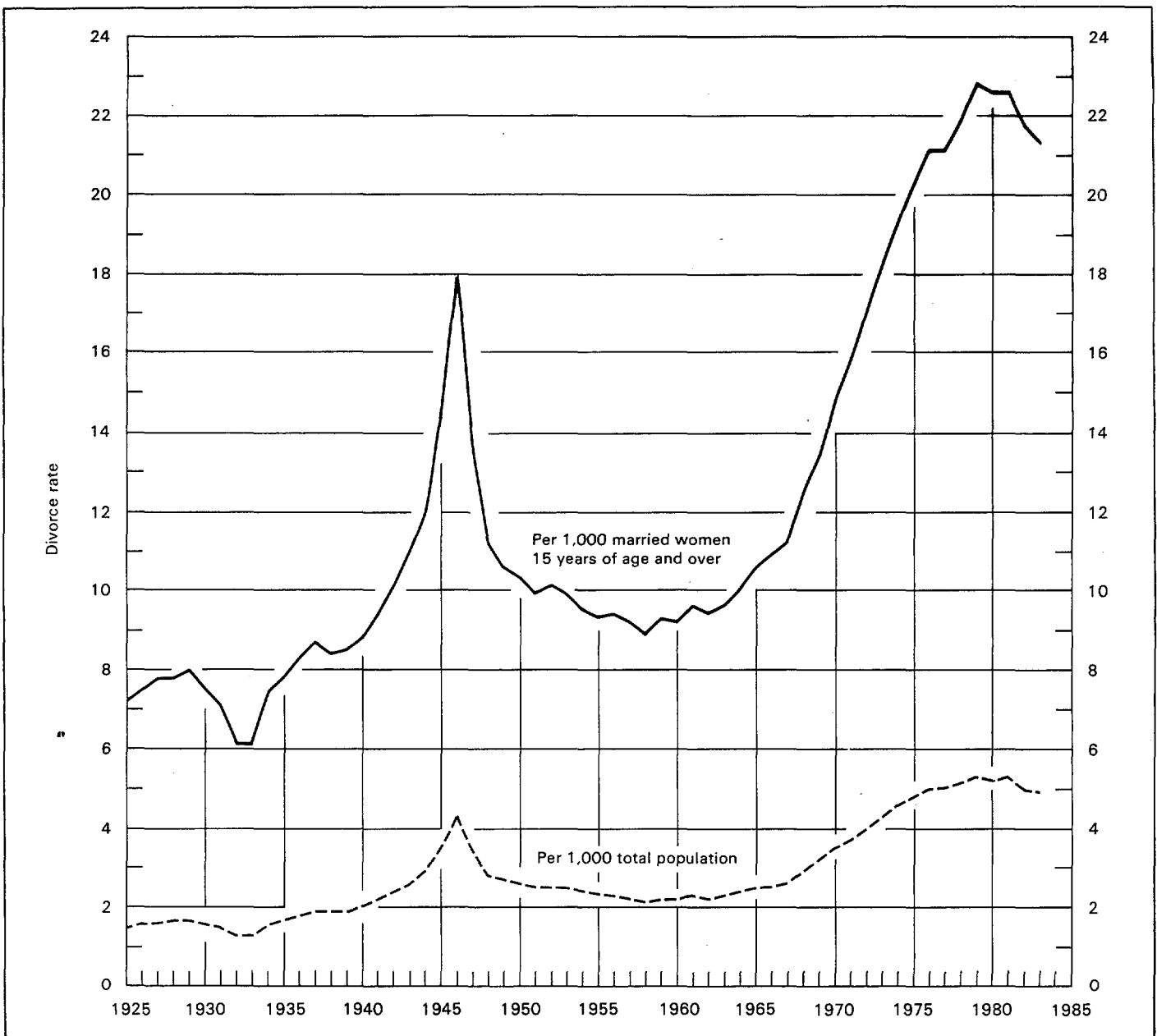


Figure 1. Divorce rates: United States, 1925-83

per decree ranged among States, from a low of 0.79 in Tennessee and Virginia to a high of 1.23 in Utah. While Utah has the highest average number of children per divorcing couple, it does not have the highest rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age. That rate ranged among States, from 12.1 in Maryland to 24.4 in Wyoming. Thus children in Wyoming were more than twice as likely to have been involved in divorce in 1983 than were children in Maryland.

Age

Age-specific divorce rates, which indicate the relative likelihood of divorce among different age groups, have been cal-

culated using data from the 28 registration States in which age at divorce was reported with sufficient completeness to provide satisfactory rates (table 6).

The rates are based on unpublished population estimates prepared by the U.S. Bureau of the Census by age and marital status of men and women. As in the past, fewer men than women are reported as married. This causes the rate of divorce for married men to be higher than that of married women because the base population is smaller. In 1983, for example, the divorce rate per 1,000 married men of all ages was 19.3, slightly higher than the divorce rate of 18.9 for married women of all ages.

It also should be noted that the divorce rate for married

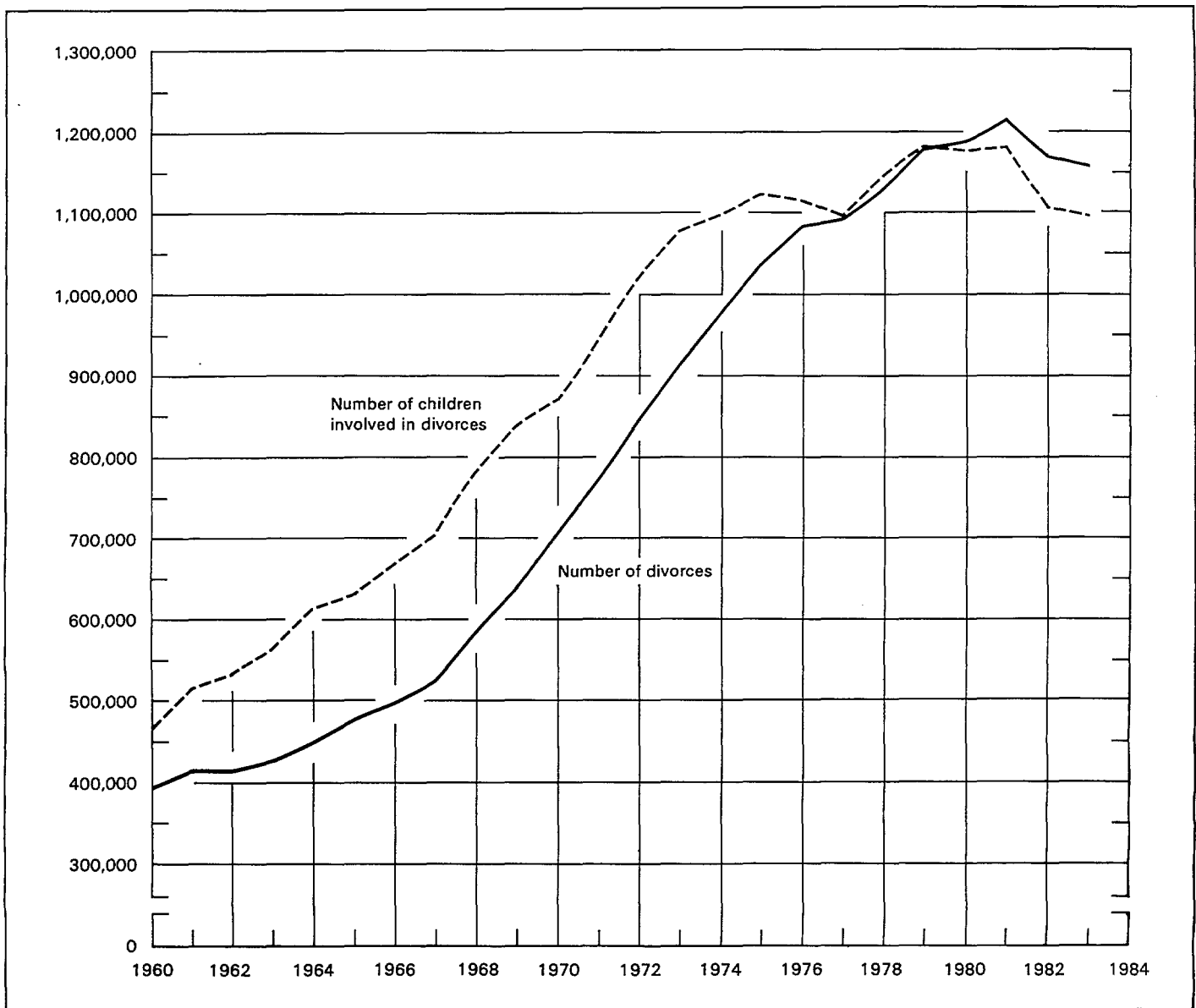


Figure 2. Divorces and children involved: United States, 1960-83

women 15 years of age and over in the 28 reporting States (18.9) is lower than the rate for married women 15 years of age and over in the United States (21.3), shown in table 1. This difference reflects the fact that many of the nonreporting States are in the South and West Regions where divorce rates tend to be higher than in the Northeast and Midwest Regions.

Divorce rates generally are highest for young men and women and decline for older age groups. In 1983, divorce rates were highest for married men 20-24 years of age (45.2 per 1,000) and for teenage women (48.1). These rates mean that almost 5 percent of the married men and women of those ages divorced in 1983. The rates dropped from these high levels for each subsequent 5-year age group so that married men 40-44 years of age were only half as likely to divorce (21.5 per 1,000), and those 50-54 were one-fourth as likely to divorce (10.7 per

1,000) as were those in their early twenties. Divorce rates for married women dropped more sharply with age than for married men, so that divorce rates for married women 50-54 years of age were only one-seventh as high (7.3) as rates for married teenage women (48.1).

Between 1982 and 1983, the age-specific divorce rates increased for women aged 35 years and over and for teenage wives. For married women in age groups 20 to 34, divorce rates dropped. For men, age-specific rates rose for all groups 45 years of age and over, but for age groups under 45, divorce rates did not move uniformly up or down. For ages 15-19 years, the rates are based on small numbers of married persons, especially men, since not many teenagers are married. These small population figures, derived from a national sample survey conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, have relatively

large sampling errors. Therefore the observed increases in the teenage rates should be interpreted with caution.

The age distribution of divorcing husbands and wives has been shifting gradually in recent years, with both husbands and wives, on the average, becoming older (table 7). The average (mean) age of divorcing husbands was 34.8 in 1978 and rose every year thereafter, reaching 36.1 in 1983. The average age of divorcing wives showed a trend similar to that of the men, increasing from 32.1 years in 1978 to 33.5 in 1983. However, the age difference between divorcing husbands and wives is quite stable. In 1978 the husbands were an average of 2.7 years older than their wives; in 1983 the difference was 2.6 years.

The trend in age at which divorcing spouses had been married showed a similar, but smaller, increase in recent years (table 8). The average (mean) age at marriage of divorcing husbands rose from 25.7 in 1978 to 26.6 in 1983 while the age at which divorcing wives had married rose from 23.1 to 24.0. This represents an increase of 0.9 year between 1978 and 1983 in age at marriage of divorcing spouses. Since ages at divorce increased slightly more (1.3–1.4 years) than ages at marriage, this suggests that duration of marriage increased slightly during the period.

There is variation among States in average ages at marriage and divorce. The average age of marriage for divorcing husbands ranged among States from 25.4 years in South Carolina to 28.6 years in Idaho. The average age of husbands at divorce ranged among States from 34.1 in Wyoming to 37.7 in New York (table 9).

Duration of dissolving marriages

The average duration of dissolving marriages was 9.6 years in 1983, slightly longer than the duration in 1982, when it was 9.4 years. Between 1978 and 1983 the average duration (calculated from dates of marriage and of divorce) increased by 0.5 year, a change that is in agreement with the changes in average ages at marriage and divorce discussed in the previous section. Both the median and mean duration had decreased during the early 1970's before increasing to the levels observed in 1983 (table 10).

Variations in duration from year to year are minor compared with variations among States. In 1983 duration from marriage to decree ranged from an average (mean) of 7.2 years in Wyoming to 11.8 years in Massachusetts (table 11).

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, 1940-83

[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]

Year	Divorces and annulments	Rate per 1,000—	
		Total population	Married women 15 years and over
1983	1,158,000	4.9	21.3
1982	1,170,000	5.0	21.7
1981	1,213,000	5.3	22.6
1980	1,189,000	5.2	22.6
1979	1,181,000	5.3	22.8
1978	1,130,000	5.1	21.9
1977	1,091,000	5.0	21.1
1976	1,083,000	5.0	21.1
1975	1,036,000	4.8	20.3
1974	977,000	4.6	19.3
1973	915,000	4.3	18.2
1972	845,000	4.0	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
1949	397,000	2.7	10.6
1948	408,000	2.8	11.2
1947	483,000	3.4	13.6
1946	610,000	4.3	17.9
1945	485,000	3.5	14.4
1944	400,000	2.9	12.0
1943	359,000	2.6	11.0
1942	321,000	2.4	10.1
1941	293,000	2.2	9.4
1940	264,000	2.0	8.8

Table 2. Divorces and divorce rates: United States, each region, division, and State, 1973, 1982, and 1983

[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]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1983	1982	1973	1983	1982	1973
United States.....	1,158,000	1,170,000	1,915,000	4.9	15.0	14.3
Regions:						
Northeast.....	178,000	182,000	136,000	3.6	3.7	2.7
Midwest ²	268,000	272,000	234,000	4.6	4.6	4.1
South.....	444,000	445,000	326,000	5.6	5.7	14.9
West.....	268,000	271,000	219,000	5.8	16.0	15.9
Northeast:						
New England.....	47,364	49,491	35,029	3.8	4.0	2.9
Middle Atlantic.....	130,951	132,300	100,645	3.5	3.6	2.7
Midwest: ²						
East North Central ³	192,889	195,800	166,485	4.7	4.7	*
West North Central.....	74,642	75,891	60,704	4.3	4.4	3.7
South:						
South Atlantic.....	206,175	206,548	150,304	5.3	5.4	4.5
East South Central.....	³ 84,966	³ 83,583	66,290	³ 5.7	³ 5.6	4.9
West South Central ³	152,701	154,674	106,597	5.9	6.1	*
West:						
Mountain.....	87,886	³ 83,334	³ 59,422	7.1	*	*
Pacific.....	179,709	185,833	157,704	5.3	5.6	5.7
New England:						
Maine.....	5,955	5,819	4,550	5.2	5.1	4.3
New Hampshire.....	4,805	5,045	3,856	5.0	5.3	4.8
Vermont.....	2,575	2,615	1,582	4.9	5.0	3.4
Massachusetts.....	18,477	19,531	14,539	3.2	3.4	2.5
Rhode Island.....	3,525	3,619	2,423	3.7	3.8	2.5
Connecticut.....	12,027	12,862	8,079	3.8	4.1	2.6
Middle Atlantic:						
New York.....	64,160	63,241	47,886	3.6	3.6	2.6
New Jersey.....	26,641	27,779	21,754	3.6	3.7	3.0
Pennsylvania.....	40,150	41,280	31,005	3.4	3.5	2.6
East North Central:						
Ohio.....	³ 54,111	³ 53,315	48,001	³ 5.0	³ 4.9	4.5
Indiana.....	⁴ 33,898	⁴ 35,780	³ 22,322	⁴ 6.2	⁴ 6.5	*
Illinois.....	50,388	49,639	45,152	4.4	4.3	4.0
Michigan.....	37,991	39,739	39,415	4.2	4.4	4.3
Wisconsin.....	16,501	17,327	11,595	3.5	3.7	2.6
West North Central:						
Minnesota.....	14,817	15,177	11,156	3.6	3.7	2.9
Iowa.....	10,588	10,868	9,151	3.6	3.7	3.2
Missouri.....	25,904	26,292	21,777	5.2	5.3	4.6
North Dakota.....	2,336	2,198	1,422	3.4	3.3	2.3
South Dakota.....	2,556	2,564	1,802	3.7	3.7	2.7
Nebraska.....	6,234	6,400	4,924	3.9	4.0	3.2
Kansas.....	12,207	12,392	10,472	5.0	5.1	4.6
South Atlantic:						
Delaware.....	3,060	3,213	2,188	5.0	5.4	3.8
Maryland.....	16,273	16,083	14,145	3.8	3.8	3.4
District of Columbia.....	3,051	3,545	2,975	4.9	5.7	4.1
Virginia.....	25,482	26,138	16,078	4.6	4.8	3.3
West Virginia.....	10,113	10,198	7,056	5.2	5.2	3.9
North Carolina.....	30,099	29,614	18,532	5.0	4.9	3.4
South Carolina.....	13,601	13,600	8,266	4.2	4.2	3.0
Georgia.....	33,270	33,128	25,058	5.8	5.9	5.1
Florida.....	71,226	71,029	56,006	6.6	6.8	7.1
East South Central:						
Kentucky.....	³ 16,985	³ 16,213	13,030	³ 4.6	³ 4.4	3.9
Tennessee.....	29,355	29,599	22,074	6.3	6.4	5.3
Alabama.....	25,190	24,910	20,399	6.4	6.3	5.7
Mississippi.....	13,436	12,861	10,787	5.2	5.0	4.6

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Divorces and divorce rates: United States, each region, division, and State, 1973, 1982, and 1983—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]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1983	1982	1973	1983	1982	1973
West South Central:						
Arkansas ³	15,681	15,739	15,219	6.7	6.8	7.4
Louisiana ³	16,204	16,765	7,294	3.6	3.8	*
Oklahoma.....	23,755	23,926	⁴ 19,932	7.2	7.4	⁴ 7.4
Texas.....	97,061	98,244	64,152	6.2	6.4	5.3
Mountain:						
Montana.....	4,561	4,612	3,772	5.6	5.7	5.2
Idaho.....	6,178	6,186	4,341	6.3	6.3	5.6
Wyoming.....	3,978	3,961	2,275	7.7	7.8	6.4
Colorado.....	19,409	18,710	14,370	6.2	6.1	5.8
New Mexico.....	11,922	³ 48,101	³ 5,383	8.5	*	*
Arizona.....	19,875	20,259	14,036	6.7	7.0	6.6
Utah.....	8,525	8,413	5,270	5.3	5.4	4.5
Nevada.....	13,438	13,092	9,975	15.0	14.9	17.5
Pacific:						
Washington.....	27,503	27,980	21,581	6.4	6.5	6.2
Oregon.....	16,173	16,792	12,382	6.1	6.3	5.5
California.....	127,532	133,367	117,509	5.1	5.4	5.6
Alaska.....	3,918	3,461	2,062	8.1	7.8	6.2
Hawaii.....	4,583	4,233	4,170	4.5	4.2	4.9

¹Figure includes estimate.

²Formerly North Central Region.

³Data are incomplete.

⁴Data include divorce petitions filed for some counties.

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, 1950-83

[Data refer to children under 18 years of age and only to events occurring within the United States. Beginning in 1960, estimated from frequencies based on sample data; for 1950-59, 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
1983.....	1,091,000	0.94	17.4	1966.....	669,000	1.34	9.5
1982.....	1,108,000	0.94	17.6	1965.....	630,000	1.32	8.9
1981.....	1,180,000	0.97	18.7	1964.....	613,000	1.36	8.7
1980.....	1,174,000	0.98	17.3	1963.....	562,000	1.31	8.2
1979.....	1,181,000	1.00	18.4	1962.....	532,000	1.29	7.9
1978.....	1,147,000	1.01	17.7	1961.....	516,000	1.25	7.8
1977.....	1,095,000	1.00	16.7	1960.....	463,000	1.18	7.2
1976.....	1,117,000	1.03	16.9	1959.....	468,000	1.18	7.5
1975.....	1,123,000	1.08	16.7	1958.....	398,000	1.08	6.5
1974.....	1,099,000	1.12	16.2	1957.....	379,000	0.99	6.4
1973.....	1,079,000	1.17	15.7	1956.....	361,000	0.95	6.3
1972.....	1,021,000	1.20	14.7	1955.....	347,000	0.92	6.3
1971.....	946,000	1.22	13.6	1954.....	341,000	0.90	6.4
1970.....	870,000	1.22	12.5	1953.....	330,000	0.85	6.4
1969.....	840,000	1.31	11.9	1952.....	318,000	0.81	6.2
1968.....	784,000	1.34	11.1	1951.....	304,000	0.80	6.1
1967.....	701,000	1.34	9.9	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, 1983

[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	572,949	100.0	45.7	25.7	20.0	6.4	1.6	0.5
Alabama	25,300	100.0	48.2	26.2	17.5	6.1	1.4	0.7
Alaska	3,925	100.0	47.0	24.6	19.9	6.1	1.8	0.5
Connecticut	12,098	100.0	45.2	25.8	20.9	6.3	1.4	0.4
Delaware	3,060	100.0	44.9	27.1	19.6	6.3	1.8	0.3
Georgia	32,870	100.0	50.0	24.8	18.3	5.2	1.3	0.3
Hawaii	4,584	100.0	47.2	23.8	19.1	7.1	2.0	0.8
Idaho ¹	6,232	100.0	48.5	22.7	18.7	7.5	2.0	0.6
Illinois	50,350	100.0	45.6	25.2	20.0	6.7	1.8	0.7
Iowa	10,586	100.0	39.1	26.5	23.7	8.6	1.6	0.6
Kansas	12,280	100.0	45.0	26.1	20.6	6.2	1.7	0.4
Kentucky	17,095	100.0	47.2	27.8	18.1	5.3	1.2	0.4
Maryland	16,095	100.0	49.0	27.0	18.4	4.6	0.7	0.3
Massachusetts	18,530	100.0	43.3	24.2	22.7	7.4	1.7	0.7
Michigan	38,060	100.0	41.3	24.3	22.8	8.6	2.3	0.6
Missouri	25,904	100.0	46.7	26.2	19.4	5.8	1.4	0.5
Montana	4,672	100.0	44.6	26.1	20.9	6.2	1.7	0.6
Nebraska	6,234	100.0	37.7	25.3	24.9	8.9	2.4	0.7
New Hampshire	4,806	100.0	40.1	25.9	24.6	7.3	1.7	0.5
New York	64,154	100.0	50.4	23.3	18.3	6.0	1.5	0.6
Ohio	54,120	100.0	42.5	27.8	20.9	6.8	1.6	0.4
Oregon	16,185	100.0	44.0	27.3	21.5	5.6	1.2	0.4
Pennsylvania	40,220	100.0	45.4	26.1	20.1	6.3	1.6	0.5
Rhode Island	3,525	100.0	40.5	26.7	22.9	7.1	1.8	1.0
South Carolina	13,601	100.0	45.9	28.3	18.9	5.2	1.3	0.4
South Dakota	2,554	100.0	37.9	27.1	23.8	8.2	2.3	0.7
Tennessee	28,930	100.0	49.9	27.4	17.3	4.2	1.0	0.2
Utah	8,474	100.0	39.5	23.9	19.9	10.5	3.5	2.6
Vermont	2,575	100.0	36.8	25.3	27.2	8.1	2.1	0.6
Virginia	25,437	100.0	50.6	26.2	17.4	4.7	0.9	0.2
Wisconsin	16,510	100.0	36.5	26.0	24.8	9.1	2.8	0.7
Wyoming	3,983	100.0	43.4	26.1	21.5	6.9	1.5	0.6

¹This 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, 1983

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

<i>Area</i>	<i>All divorces and annulments</i>	<i>Estimated number of children involved</i>	<i>Average number of children per decree</i>	<i>Rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>All divorces and annulments</i>	<i>Estimated number of children involved</i>	<i>Average number of children per decree</i>	<i>Rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age</i>
Divorce-registration area	572,949	539,789	0.94	15.7	Montana	4,672	4,515	0.96	19.3
Alabama	25,300	22,474	0.88	20.1	Nebraska	6,234	7,203	1.15	16.3
Alaska	3,925	3,635	0.92	23.5	New Hampshire	4,806	5,108	1.06	20.4
Connecticut	12,098	11,418	0.94	14.9	New York	64,154	55,743	0.86	12.6
Delaware	3,060	2,875	0.93	18.4	Ohio	54,120	53,275	0.98	18.3
Georgia	32,870	27,658	0.84	17.0	Oregon	16,185	15,230	0.94	21.5
Hawaii	4,584	4,382	0.95	15.5	Pennsylvania	40,220	37,917	0.94	12.9
Idaho ¹	6,232	5,858	0.93	18.5	Rhode Island	3,525	3,787	1.07	16.6
Illinois	50,350	48,457	0.96	15.6	South Carolina	13,601	12,118	0.89	13.1
Iowa	10,586	11,543	1.09	14.7	South Dakota	2,554	2,863	1.12	14.1
Kansas	12,280	11,664	0.94	18.0	Tennessee	28,930	23,017	0.79	18.4
Kentucky	17,095	14,876	0.87	14.3	Utah	8,474	10,480	1.23	17.2
Maryland	16,095	13,222	0.82	12.1	Vermont	2,575	2,976	1.15	21.3
Massachusetts	18,530	18,968	1.02	13.8	Virginia	25,437	20,289	0.79	14.2
Michigan	38,060	41,266	1.08	16.4	Wisconsin	16,510	19,522	1.18	15.2
Missouri	25,904	23,516	0.90	17.9	Wyoming	3,983	3,934	0.98	24.4

¹This State reports number of children affected by decree.

Table 6. Divorces and divorce rates by age of men and women at time of decree: Divorce-registration area, 1982 and 1983

[Based on sample data. For sampling errors and a description of the divorce-registration area, see Technical notes. Rates per 1,000 married population in specified group estimated as of July 1]

Age at time of decree	Men				Women			
	Number		Rate ¹		Number		Rate ¹	
	1983	1982	1983	1982	1983	1982	1983	1982
All ages	572,949	576,928	19.3	19.4	572,949	576,928	18.9	19.0
15-19 years ²	2,846	3,150	43.3	34.9	12,554	13,408	48.1	45.6
20-24 years	55,347	58,891	45.2	47.0	87,444	92,620	43.3	44.5
25-29 years	107,728	110,170	40.0	40.3	118,878	119,942	35.7	35.9
30-34 years	106,047	106,603	32.4	32.4	98,023	99,343	27.7	28.5
35-39 years	83,668	81,695	27.3	27.0	75,291	70,599	23.9	22.9
40-44 years	57,911	53,821	21.5	21.8	47,782	43,755	18.2	17.7
45-49 years	36,529	34,417	15.9	15.3	27,715	25,427	12.1	11.8
50-54 years	24,141	23,024	10.7	10.1	16,108	15,309	7.3	6.8
55-59 years	14,818	14,097	6.2	6.1	9,353	8,820	4.1	4.0
60-64 years	8,430	7,604	3.9	3.8	5,154	5,034	2.8	2.7
65 years and over	7,797	7,765	2.0	1.9	4,404	4,161	1.5	1.4
Not stated	67,687	75,691	...	...	70,243	78,510	...	...

¹Rates exclude data for Michigan, Ohio, and South Dakota; figures for age not stated were distributed.

²Includes divorces of persons under 15 years of age.

Table 7. Percent distribution of divorces and annulments by age of husband and wife at time of decree, and median and mean ages: Divorce-registration area, 1973-83

[Based on sample data]

<i>Age of husband and wife at time of decree</i>	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973
Husband											
	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	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1
20-24 years	11.0	11.7	12.5	13.5	13.9	14.8	14.7	15.1	15.2	15.7	15.7
25-29 years	21.3	22.0	22.8	23.4	23.8	24.3	24.0	24.8	25.1	24.2	23.4
30-34 years	21.0	21.3	22.1	21.4	20.8	20.2	19.8	18.6	18.6	18.2	17.9
35-39 years	16.6	16.3	15.1	14.6	14.2	13.8	13.4	12.9	12.5	12.4	12.4
40-44 years	11.5	10.7	10.0	9.8	9.7	9.3	9.4	9.5	9.3	9.6	9.9
45-49 years	7.2	6.9	6.7	6.5	6.7	6.6	6.9	7.2	7.3	7.5	8.0
50-54 years	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.8	4.9	5.1	5.2	5.3
55-59 years	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.8	3.0
60-64 years	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.7
65 years and over	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6
	Age in years ¹										
Median age	34.0	33.6	33.1	32.7	32.5	32.0	32.4	32.3	32.2	32.2	32.4
Mean age	36.1	35.7	35.4	35.1	35.0	34.8	35.1	35.1	35.0	35.1	35.3
Wife											
	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	2.5	2.7	2.9	3.4	3.6	4.0	3.8	4.1	4.4	4.6	4.4
20-24 years	17.4	18.6	19.5	20.8	21.2	22.7	22.3	22.4	22.5	23.0	23.1
25-29 years	23.6	24.1	24.8	24.6	24.8	24.6	24.5	25.1	25.2	24.3	23.7
30-34 years	19.5	19.9	20.2	19.4	18.7	17.9	17.9	16.7	16.3	16.1	15.6
35-39 years	15.0	14.2	13.1	12.8	12.3	11.8	11.3	11.2	10.9	10.7	10.9
40-44 years	9.5	8.8	8.2	7.7	7.9	7.5	7.7	7.9	7.6	7.9	8.4
45-49 years	5.5	5.1	4.9	4.8	5.0	5.0	5.3	5.6	5.7	5.9	6.3
50-54 years	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.9
55-59 years	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.7	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.0
60-64 years	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0
65 years and over	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7
	Age in years ¹										
Median age	31.5	31.1	30.6	30.3	30.1	29.7	29.9	29.7	29.5	29.5	29.7
Mean age	33.5	33.1	32.7	32.4	32.3	32.1	32.4	32.3	32.3	32.3	32.5

¹Medians and means computed on data by single years of age.

Table 8. Percent distribution of divorces and annulments by age of husband and wife at time of marriage, and median and mean ages: Divorce-registration area, 1973-83

[Based on sample data]

<i>Age of husband and wife at time of marriage</i>	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973
Husband											
	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	15.4	16.1	17.0	18.0	18.4	19.3	18.6	18.9	19.1	19.5	19.3
20-24 years	42.5	43.0	44.0	44.0	44.3	44.7	44.5	44.4	44.8	44.6	44.8
25-29 years	19.7	19.3	18.7	18.4	18.0	17.5	17.4	17.3	17.1	16.7	16.4
30-34 years	9.3	9.0	8.6	8.1	7.9	7.4	7.6	7.4	7.3	7.3	7.3
35-39 years	5.1	5.0	4.6	4.5	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.2
40-44 years	3.2	3.0	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.9
45 years and over	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.8	5.0
	Age in years ¹										
Median age	23.8	23.7	23.4	23.3	23.2	23.0	23.1	23.1	23.0	23.0	22.9
Mean age	26.6	26.4	26.1	25.9	25.8	25.7	25.9	25.9	25.8	25.9	25.9
Wife											
	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	35.1	36.6	38.3	39.9	41.0	42.8	42.2	42.5	43.3	43.8	44.5
20-24 years	36.3	36.2	35.9	35.5	35.1	34.2	34.0	33.8	33.7	33.3	32.8
25-29 years	13.3	12.7	12.1	11.4	11.0	10.5	10.7	10.3	9.9	9.9	9.4
30-34 years	6.7	6.2	5.8	5.6	5.4	5.0	5.2	5.2	4.8	4.8	4.8
35-39 years	3.7	3.6	3.2	3.1	3.1	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.0	2.9	3.1
40-44 years	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1
45 years and over	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.7	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.3
	Age in years ¹										
Median age	21.5	21.3	21.1	20.9	20.9	20.7	20.7	20.7	20.6	20.6	20.5
Mean age	24.0	23.8	23.5	23.3	23.2	23.1	23.3	23.3	23.2	23.2	23.2

¹Medians and means computed on data by single years of age.

Table 9. Mean ages of divorced husband and wife at time of marriage and at time of decree: Divorce-registration area and each registration State, 1983

[Based on sample data]

<i>Area</i>	<i>Mean age of husband</i>		<i>Mean age of wife</i>	
	<i>At decree</i>	<i>At marriage</i>	<i>At decree</i>	<i>At marriage</i>
Divorce-registration area	36.1	26.6	33.5	24.0
Alabama	35.2	27.1	32.5	24.5
Alaska	34.6	27.4	31.9	24.7
Connecticut	37.5	26.5	35.0	24.0
Delaware	36.4	26.3	33.7	23.8
Georgia	34.9	26.9	32.3	24.3
Hawaii	36.4	27.5	33.6	24.8
Idaho	36.0	28.6	33.0	25.6
Illinois	35.8	26.7	33.2	24.1
Iowa	35.3	26.0	32.8	23.5
Kansas	34.7	26.8	32.2	24.4
Kentucky	34.7	26.6	32.1	23.9
Maryland	37.2	26.2	34.5	23.5
Massachusetts	37.4	25.7	34.9	23.4
Michigan	36.2	26.3	33.6	23.7
Missouri	35.5	26.9	32.8	24.2
Montana	35.5	27.6	32.8	24.9
Nebraska	35.4	26.0	32.9	23.6
New Hampshire	35.6	26.2	33.0	23.7
New York	37.7	26.9	35.1	24.4
Ohio	35.9	26.6	33.3	24.0
Oregon	37.4	28.5	34.4	25.6
Pennsylvania	36.8	25.6	34.3	23.1
Rhode Island	37.0	26.2	34.4	23.7
South Carolina	35.2	25.4	32.6	22.9
South Dakota	34.4	25.9	31.4	22.9
Tennessee	35.0	26.8	32.3	24.2
Utah	34.4	26.6	31.7	23.9
Vermont	37.0	26.1	34.2	23.3
Virginia	36.2	25.8	33.7	23.3
Wisconsin	35.8	25.5	33.2	23.0
Wyoming	34.1	26.9	31.3	24.1

Table 10. Mean and median duration of marriage to decree: Divorce-registration area, 1970-83

[Based on sample data]

<i>Year</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>
1983	9.6	7.0	1976	9.2	6.5
1982	9.4	7.0	1975	9.2	6.5
1981	9.3	7.0	1974	9.3	6.5
1980	9.2	6.8	1973	9.4	6.6
1979	9.3	6.8	1972	9.5	6.7
1978	9.1	6.6	1971	9.5	6.7
1977	9.2	6.6	1970	9.5	6.7

Table 11. Percent distribution of divorces and annulments by duration of marriage to decree and median and mean duration of marriage to decree: Divorce-registration area, 1983

[Based on sample data]

Area	Duration of marriage							Median	Mean
	Total	Under 1 year	1-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-19 years	20 years and over		
	Percent distribution							Years ¹	
Divorce-registration area	100.0	4.1	33.5	25.9	15.7	9.1	11.7	7.0	9.6
Alabama.....	100.0	11.4	38.4	21.3	10.8	8.6	9.6	5.0	8.1
Alaska.....	100.0	6.6	42.9	25.8	12.0	6.7	5.9	5.1	7.3
Connecticut.....	100.0	1.5	29.0	25.1	17.0	11.4	16.2	8.7	11.1
Delaware.....	100.0	2.7	31.2	27.2	16.3	10.3	12.3	7.6	10.2
Georgia.....	100.0	8.2	38.9	23.3	13.6	7.9	8.2	5.5	8.1
Hawaii.....	100.0	3.5	37.0	26.3	15.9	7.7	9.6	6.5	8.9
Idaho.....	100.0	8.3	39.7	24.1	12.5	7.2	8.2	5.3	7.9
Illinois.....	100.0	4.4	35.2	25.5	15.3	8.5	11.1	6.7	9.2
Iowa.....	100.0	3.1	35.7	25.9	15.4	8.6	11.2	6.9	9.4
Kansas.....	100.0	7.3	41.3	23.6	12.6	6.6	8.5	5.2	7.9
Kentucky.....	100.0	7.3	38.4	24.5	13.7	7.6	8.5	5.7	8.2
Maryland.....	100.0	0.3	23.1	30.1	19.2	11.6	15.7	9.2	11.6
Massachusetts.....	100.0	0.2	22.2	29.4	20.8	11.0	16.4	9.6	11.8
Michigan.....	100.0	2.9	31.4	27.2	15.4	10.6	12.7	7.6	10.0
Missouri.....	100.0	5.8	38.2	24.5	14.0	7.6	9.8	5.9	8.6
Montana.....	100.0	6.5	39.8	25.2	13.1	7.2	8.2	5.5	8.0
Nebraska.....	100.0	3.7	35.9	25.0	15.3	8.2	11.9	6.7	9.4
New Hampshire.....	100.0	2.3	31.4	27.4	17.7	9.4	11.8	7.7	9.9
New York.....	100.0	2.2	28.9	25.7	17.6	10.6	14.9	8.5	10.8
Ohio.....	100.0	4.7	36.0	25.4	15.0	8.4	10.5	6.4	9.0
Oregon.....	100.0	3.5	36.0	27.4	15.1	8.6	9.4	6.4	8.9
Pennsylvania.....	100.0	1.2	26.0	29.1	18.2	10.3	15.2	8.8	11.2
Rhode Island.....	100.0	1.0	28.6	27.7	17.9	9.9	14.8	8.5	10.8
South Carolina.....	100.0	2.0	33.2	26.9	16.8	9.3	11.8	7.4	9.9
South Dakota.....	100.0	4.0	37.0	26.9	13.6	7.6	11.0	6.2	9.0
Tennessee.....	100.0	7.6	38.7	23.0	14.5	7.4	8.7	5.6	8.2
Utah.....	100.0	6.7	41.0	25.4	12.7	6.9	7.4	5.3	7.8
Vermont.....	100.0	0.7	25.8	29.2	19.5	10.6	14.1	8.8	11.0
Virginia.....	100.0	0.8	30.0	28.2	17.2	10.3	13.5	8.1	10.5
Wisconsin.....	100.0	1.0	31.4	27.5	16.8	10.4	12.9	8.1	10.3
Wyoming.....	100.0	8.0	42.3	25.7	11.9	5.6	6.4	5.0	7.2

¹Medians and means computed on data by single years of duration.

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 and 2 are based on totals of divorce decrees granted that are 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 is available only from States that participate in the divorce-registration area (DRA). Figures in tables 3-11 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 1973-77, 29 States participated in the DRA; in 1978, 28 States; in 1979-80, 30 States; and in 1981-83, 31 States participated. Divorces in States constituting the DRA accounted for 50 percent of the national total in 1983.

Divorce sample

Sample data used to compute data shown in tables 3-11 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, Delaware, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Wyoming were coded by 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

Sampling error of estimated percent: Divorce-registration area, 1973, 1982, and 1983, and each registration State, 1983

[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 1983 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				
1983 (31 States)	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2
1982 (31 States)	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
1973 (29 States)	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Registration States, 1983				
Alabama	0.2	0.6	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	0.4	0.6	0.7
Idaho	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.6
Illinois . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Iowa	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.5
Kansas	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.9
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	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Missouri . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Montana	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.7
Nebraska . . . . .	...	...	...	...
New Hampshire . . . . .	...	...	...	...
New York . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Ohio	0.2	0.6	0.8	0.9
Oregon	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Pennsylvania	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.7
Rhode Island . . . . .	...	...	...	...
South Carolina . . . . .	...	...	...	...
South Dakota . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Tennessee	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.9
Utah	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.5
Vermont . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Virginia . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Wisconsin	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Wyoming . . . . .	...	...	...	...

HOW TO USE SAMPLING ERROR TABLE: For estimated percents shown in tables 4, 7-8, and 11, find the column closest to that percent to determine the sampling error. For example, in 1983, an estimated 25.7 percent of divorcing couples in the divorce-registration area had 1 child. In the cell formed by column "25 or 75" and the row "1983 (31 States)" is the figure 0.1. Thus chances are 68 out of 100 that the actual percent of couples with 1 child is between 25.6 and 25.8 (25.7 ± 0.1).

and each registration State for 1983 data and only for the DRA for 1973 and 1982 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 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 1983 are based on populations estimated as of July 1, 1983.^{1,2} Divorce rates for 1980 are based on the population enumerated in the 1980 census.

¹U.S. Bureau of the Census: State population estimates, by age and components of change, 1980 to 1984. *Current Population Reports*. Series P-25, No. 970. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, June 1985.

²Unpublished estimates by marital status prepared by the U.S. Bureau of the Census consistent with: Estimates of the population of the United States, by age, sex, and race, 1980 to 1983. *Current Population Reports*. Series P-25, No. 949. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, May 1984.

Computation of percent distributions, medians, and means

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

This report represents summary tabulations from the final divorce statistics for 1983. More detailed tabulations for 1983 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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