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VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Advance Report

Final Divorce Statistics, 1974

FROM THE

NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

The national divorce rate moved to a new high in 1974. The rate was 4.6 per 1,000 population compared with 4.4 in 1973 and the former alltime peak of 4.3 in 1946. However, the rapid increase in the divorce rate that began in 1968 is tapering off. The increase of 4.5 percent from 1973 to 1974 was the smallest annual increase in the divorce rate since 1967. Beginning in 1968 through 1972 the average annual increase in the divorce rate was 11.5 percent; from 1972 to 1973 the increase was 7.3 percent.

In 1974, 977,000 divorces were granted in the United States, including decrees of absolute divorce, annulment, and marriage dissolution (table 1). This was more than twice the national total at the beginning of the decade, which was 479,000 in 1965. The increase in 1974 in the number of divorces granted was the 12th consecutive annual increase (table 2).

Provisional data indicate that the annual number of divorces surpassed the one million mark in 1975 for the first time. The provisional rate was 4.8 per 1,000 population, 4.3 percent above the final rate for 1974.

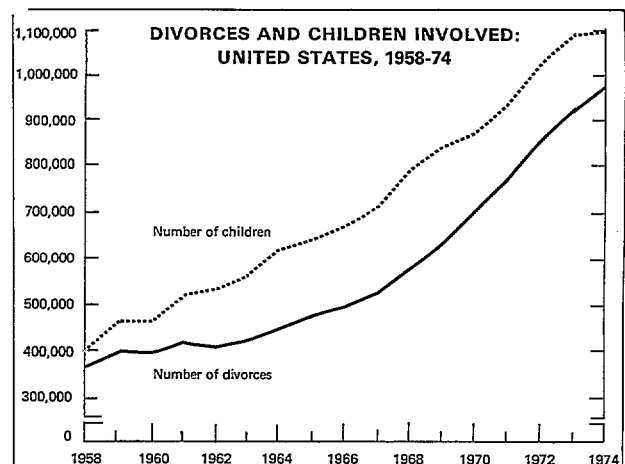
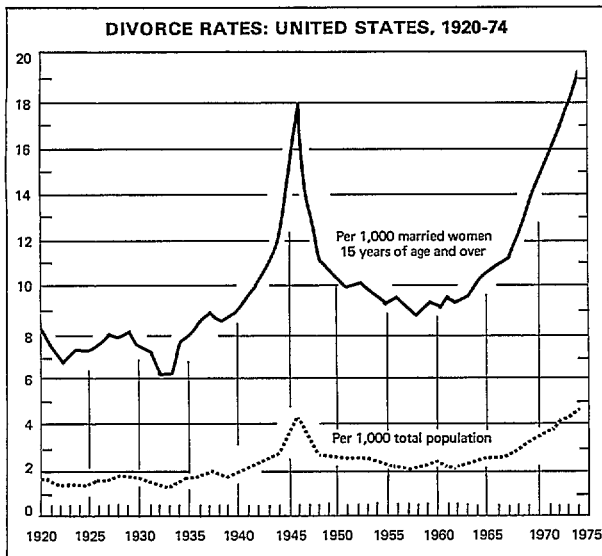
The 1974 national divorce rate per 1,000 married women was 19.3, indicating that almost 2 percent of all married women were divorced during the year. In 1973 this rate was 18.2; the former alltime peak was 17.9 in 1946.

Data from States in the divorce-registration area (DRA) indicate that 31 percent of the marriages that were ended by divorce in 1974 had lasted less than 4 years; 40 percent, less than 5 years; and 66 percent had lasted less than 10 years.

In 1974 the median duration of marriage at divorce was slightly shorter than that for earlier years. For the DRA the median duration of marriage at decree was 6.5 years in 1974, 6.6 years in 1973, and 6.7 years in 1972 (table 3).

Although age of the divorcing parties is not well reported by all States in the DRA, the data that are reported provide some indication of the age distribution of these individuals. Of those divorcing in 1974 for whom age was reported, 41 percent of the men and 52 percent of the women were under 30 years of age at the time the divorce was granted; 72 percent of the men and 79 percent of the women were under age 40.

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The couples that divorced in 1974 had an estimated 1,099,000 children under 18 years of age (table 4). The annual estimated number of children of divorcing couples was above one million in 1972, 1973, and 1974. The average number of children per decree had declined: it was 1.12 in 1974, 1.17 in 1973, and 1.20 in 1972. The alltime high was 1.36 in 1964.

The numbers of children under 18 years of age reported in divorce cases in 1974 are shown in table 5. For the entire DRA, 42 percent of divorcing couples had no children under 18 years of age (though some may have had children aged 18 or more), 26 percent had 1 child; 19 percent, 2 children; 8 percent, 3 children; 4 percent, 4 children; and 2 percent had 5 children or more.

This report presents summary tabulations from the final divorce statistics for 1974. More detailed tabulations for 1974 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.

Table 4. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN DIVORCES AND ANNULMENTS: UNITED STATES, 1954-74

[Refers only to events occurring within the United States. For 1960-74 estimated from frequencies based on sample; 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
1974	1,099,000	1.12
1973	1,079,000	1.17
1972	1,021,000	1.20
1971	946,000	1.22
1970	870,000	1.22
1969	840,000	1.31
1968	784,000	1.34
1967	701,000	1.34
1966	669,000	1.34
1965	620,000	1.32
1964	615,000	1.36
1963	562,000	1.31
1962	532,000	1.29
1961	516,000	1.25
1960	465,000	1.18
1959	468,000	1.18
1958	398,000	1.08
1957	379,000	0.99
1956	361,000	0.95
1955	347,000	0.92
1954	341,000	0.90

¹Revised.

Table 5. DIVORCES AND ANNULMENTS BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN REPORTED: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1974

[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	571,784	230,036	140,057	102,843	45,521	19,331	10,357	23,584
Alabama	21,180	9,080	5,090	3,430	1,480	660	310	1,060
Alaska	2,482	1,088	562	448	188	84	63	27
California	121,200	49,560	23,340	20,240	9,230	3,180	1,390	11,260
Connecticut	17,360	3,676	2,576	2,186	1,074	413	273	642
Georgia	26,826	11,760	6,960	4,340	1,835	750	290	930
Hawaii	4,103	1,041	1,083	321	360	141	94	19
Idaho	4,803	1,933	1,266	532	470	136	90	86
Illinois	47,790	19,310	11,320	8,540	3,990	1,620	1,120	1,330
Iowa	9,394	3,283	2,416	1,882	976	332	203	412
Kansas	11,536	4,832	2,932	2,110	522	414	216	90
Kentucky	13,800	5,826	3,470	2,240	1,020	550	250	345
Maryland	15,020	5,850	3,405	2,545	1,085	510	290	1,355
Michigan	28,960	10,980	6,810	5,820	2,910	1,370	650	400
Missouri	22,085	9,785	5,685	3,755	1,535	725	410	210
Montana	3,960	1,645	932	714	350	139	86	84
Nebraska	5,220	2,054	1,308	1,023	492	182	150	8
New York	53,960	21,930	11,830	10,230	4,600	1,740	1,000	2,530
Ohio	49,330	18,960	13,320	9,230	4,200	2,190	1,190	200
Oregon	13,370	6,085	2,970	2,550	1,125	415	170	45
Pennsylvania	32,670	11,730	8,470	6,480	2,940	1,410	610	960
Rhode Island	2,519	903	639	534	291	112	85	55
South Carolina	8,814	3,624	2,372	1,672	676	242	123	100
South Dakota	2,021	758	507	407	177	110	60	2
Tennessee	23,750	10,330	6,120	3,805	1,610	595	370	420
Utah	5,472	2,058	1,270	944	492	233	154	316
Vermont	1,516	497	356	314	166	95	49	40
Virginia	16,625	6,735	4,835	2,950	1,230	495	310	80
Wisconsin	10,032	3,382	2,618	2,166	1,078	456	300	92
Wyoming	2,527	1,125	597	418	201	92	47	47

¹Data are for number of children affected by decree.

²Excludes data for Wayne County.

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TECHNICAL NOTES

Place and Time of Occurrence

Divorces and annulments are shown in all tables by State where decree was granted, which is also the State of legal residence of the plaintiff. The time of divorce or annulment is based on the date the decree was granted.

Sources of Data

Figures in tables 1 and 2 are based on totals of divorce or annulment decrees tabulated and reported by States and counties. Figures in tables 3 and 5 are based on probability-samples of divorce and annulment records that were coded and tabulated in this office.

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 1961-74 were prepared by multiplying the national divorce rate 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, and 29 registration States in 1971-74.

SAMPLING ERROR OF ESTIMATED FREQUENCY EXPRESSED AS PERCENTAGE OF AREA TOTAL: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA, 1972-74 AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1974

[Figures for Alaska, Hawaii, Montana, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming have no sampling errors 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:				
1974 (29 States) ¹ -----	194	585	845	975
1973 (29 States)-----	197	593	856	988
1972 (29 States)-----	189	569	821	948
Registration States, 1974:				
Alabama-----	43	131	189	218
Alaska-----	...	...	...	...
California-----	104	314	453	523
Connecticut-----	10	31	45	52
Georgia-----	33	98	142	164
Hawaii-----	...	...	...	...
Idaho-----	7	21	30	35
Illinois-----	66	198	286	330
Iowa-----	10	29	42	49
Kansas-----	11	32	46	53
Kentucky-----	23	70	102	117
Maryland-----	24	74	106	123
Michigan ¹ -----	51	153	221	256
Missouri-----	30	89	129	149
Montana-----	...	...	...	...
Nebraska-----	7	22	31	36
New York-----	69	209	302	349
Ohio-----	66	200	288	333
Oregon-----	25	70	101	117
Pennsylvania-----	54	162	234	271
Rhode Island-----	...	...	...	...
South Carolina-----	9	28	41	47
South Dakota-----	...	...	...	...
Tennessee-----	31	92	133	154
Utah-----	8	23	33	38
Vermont-----	...	...	...	...
Virginia-----	26	78	112	129
Wisconsin-----	12	36	52	60
Wyoming-----	...	...	...	...

¹Excludes Wayne County, Michigan.

Divorce Samples

Sample data used to estimate the 1974 frequencies in table 5 and the frequencies used to compute median duration of marriage for 1972-74 in table 3 were selected by using four different sampling rates, depending on the size of the annual divorce total for a State. The rates were 10, 20, 50, or 100 percent of the divorces granted in a State. Samples were selected only from the States that participated in the divorce-registration area.

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 divorce-registration area and each registration State for 1974 data and only for the divorce-registration area for 1972 and 1973 data.

SYMBOLS USED IN TABLES

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

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