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# VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

## Summary Report

### Final Divorce Statistics, 1973

FROM THE

NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

In 1973 the divorce rate, 4.4 per 1,000 population, was the highest ever recorded for the United States. It exceeded, for the first time, the peak annual rate (4.3) experienced in 1946 in the wake of World War II. This continued the rapid increase in the divorce rate that began in 1968 following the slight upward trend of the mid-1960's and the relatively stable rates of the early 1960's. Provisional data for 1974 indicate an even higher rate (4.6).

A total of 915,000 divorces, including annulments, were granted in the United States in 1973. This figure was 8 percent above the total for 1972 (845,000) and 18 percent higher than the total for 1971 (773,000).

When compared with figures 10 years earlier (1963), the national divorce total more than doubled, from 428,000 to 915,000. The rate per 1,000 total population and the rate per 1,000 married females both increased around 90 percent, from 2.3 to 4.4 and from 9.6 to 18.2, respectively (table 2).

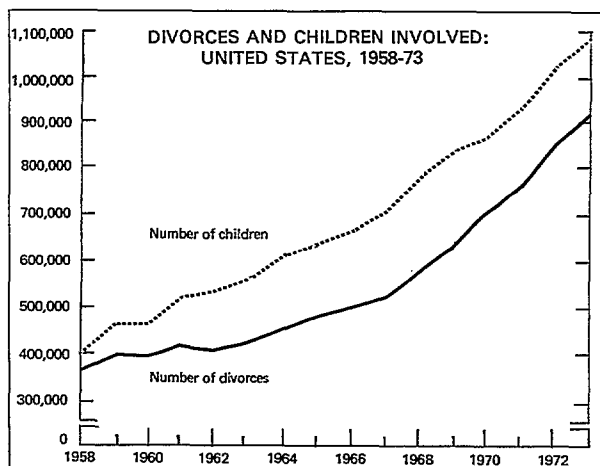
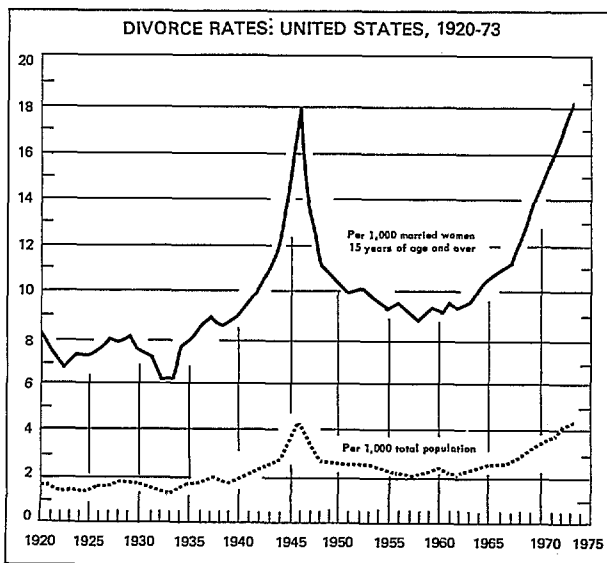
From 1972 to 1973 the divorce rate increased in almost all States for which information is available.

The rate decreased in Alaska, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, and Nevada and did not change in Massachusetts and Wyoming (table 1).

The median duration of marriage prior to divorce declined slightly. For the divorce-registration area, the median duration at time of decree was 6.6 years compared with 6.7 years for 1971 and 1972. From 1972 to 1973 this median declined in 17 States, increased in nine States, and remained unchanged in three States (table 3).

In 1973 the number of children under 18 years of age whose parents divorced was an estimated 1,079,000. This is the second year that more than 1 million children were affected by divorce. The 1973 estimate nearly doubled the estimate for 10 years earlier (562,000 in 1963). In spite of the pronounced increase, the average number of children per decree continued to decline, 1.17 in 1973 and 1.20 in 1972 compared with a maximum of 1.36 in 1964 (table 4).

In 1973, 40 percent of divorcing couples had no children under 18 years of age; 25 percent had one child; 19 percent, two children; and 15 percent had three children or more. Data for each reporting State are shown in table 5.



## MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Table 1. DIVORCES AND RATES: UNITED STATES, EACH REGION, DIVISION, AND STATE, 1971-73

[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, 1971, 1972, and 1973.]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate			Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1973	1972	1971	1973	1972	1971		1973	1972	1971	1973	1972	1971
United States <sup>1</sup> -----	915,000	845,000	773,000	4.4	4.2	3.7	West North Central--Con.						
Regions:							Missouri-----	21,777	20,699	19,643	4.6	4.4	4.1
Northeast-----	136,000	119,000	101,000	2.7	2.4	2.0	North Dakota-----	1,422	1,298	1,181	2.2	2.0	1.9
North Central <sup>1</sup> -----	234,000	216,000	204,000	4.1	3.8	3.5	South Dakota-----	1,802	1,627	1,403	2.6	2.4	2.1
South-----	326,000	301,000	289,000	4.9	4.6	4.2	Nebraska-----	4,924	4,394	4,013	3.2	2.9	2.7
West <sup>1</sup> -----	219,000	207,000	199,000	6.0	5.7	5.6	Kansas-----	10,472	9,925	9,461	4.6	4.4	4.2
Northeast:							South Atlantic:						
New England-----	35,029	33,480	29,755	2.9	2.8	2.5	Delaware-----	2,188	1,836	1,830	3.8	3.2	3.3
Middle Atlantic-----	100,845	85,898	71,107	2.7	2.5	1.9	Maryland-----	14,145	11,520	10,060	3.5	2.8	2.5
North Central:							District of Columbia-----	2,975	3,284	2,629	4.0	4.4	3.5
East North Central <sup>2</sup> -----	166,485	157,093	145,305	*	*	*	Virginia-----	16,078	14,155	13,261	3.3	3.0	2.8
West North Central-----	60,704	56,664	53,018	3.6	3.4	3.2	West Virginia-----	7,056	6,270	6,178	3.9	3.5	3.5
South:							North Carolina-----	18,532	17,277	15,350	3.5	3.3	3.0
South Atlantic-----	150,304	135,749	119,938	4.6	4.3	3.8	South Carolina-----	8,286	7,646	6,657	3.0	2.8	2.5
East South Central-----	66,290	61,510	54,472	5.0	4.7	4.2	Georgia-----	25,059	22,044	20,245	5.2	4.7	4.3
West South Central-----	106,597	103,749	94,375	*	25.2	4.8	Florida-----	56,006	51,677	43,728	7.3	7.0	6.2
West:							East South Central:						
Mountain <sup>3</sup> -----	59,422	57,288	53,888	*	*	*	Kentucky-----	13,030	11,854	11,141	3.9	3.6	3.4
Pacific-----	157,704	149,975	143,640	5.8	5.5	5.3	Tennessee-----	22,074	20,601	17,430	5.8	5.1	4.4
New England:							Alabama-----	20,399	18,958	16,905	5.9	5.4	4.9
Maine-----	4,550	4,157	3,925	4.4	4.1	3.9	Mississippi-----	10,787	10,097	8,936	4.7	4.5	4.0
New Hampshire-----	3,856	3,196	2,941	4.9	4.1	3.9	West South Central:						
Vermont-----	1,582	1,253	1,171	3.4	2.7	2.6	Arkansas-----	215,219	14,499	12,959	27.5	7.2	6.7
Massachusetts-----	14,539	14,441	12,881	2.5	2.5	2.2	Louisiana-----	27,294	210,618	9,431	*	22.8	2.6
Rhode Island-----	2,423	2,016	1,803	2.5	2.1	1.9	Oklahoma <sup>3</sup> -----	19,932	18,289	16,417	7.5	6.9	6.3
Connecticut-----	8,079	8,415	7,054	2.6	2.7	2.3	Texas-----	64,152	60,343	55,568	5.4	5.2	4.6
Middle Atlantic:							Mountain:						
New York-----	47,886	40,902	33,101	2.6	2.2	1.8	Montana-----	3,772	3,609	3,366	5.2	5.0	4.8
New Jersey-----	21,754	17,495	12,896	3.0	2.4	1.8	Idaho-----	4,341	3,947	3,664	5.6	5.1	5.0
Pennsylvania-----	31,005	27,501	25,110	2.6	2.3	2.1	Wyoming-----	2,275	2,218	1,988	6.4	6.4	5.8
East North Central:							Colorado-----	14,370	12,604	11,809	5.9	5.3	5.2
Ohio-----	48,001	44,673	42,186	4.5	4.2	3.9	New Mexico <sup>2</sup> -----	5,383	5,259	4,880	*	*	*
Indiana <sup>2</sup> -----	22,522	22,902	22,266	*	*	*	Arizona-----	14,036	13,197	12,588	6.8	6.7	7.9
Illinois-----	45,152	43,092	40,156	4.0	3.8	3.6	Utah-----	5,270	4,904	4,419	4.6	4.4	4.0
Michigan-----	39,415	35,934	31,780	4.4	4.0	3.5	Nevada-----	9,975	11,650	9,474	18.2	21.9	18.5
Wisconsin-----	11,595	10,492	8,927	2.5	2.3	2.0	Pacific:						
West North Central:							Washington-----	21,581	20,513	19,207	6.3	6.0	5.6
Minnesota-----	11,156	10,280	9,545	2.9	2.6	2.5	Oregon-----	12,382	11,708	10,687	5.6	5.4	5.0
Iowa-----	8,151	8,471	7,772	3.2	2.9	2.7	California-----	117,508	110,718	106,309	5.7	5.4	5.4
							Alaska-----	2,062	2,147	1,746	6.2	6.6	5.6
							Hawaii-----	4,170	3,891	3,691	5.0	4.8	4.7

<sup>1</sup>Figures include estimates.

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

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

<sup>4</sup>Data are for divorce petitions filed.

Table 2. DIVORCES AND ANNULMENTS AND RATES: UNITED STATES, 1950-73

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

Year	Divorces and annulments	Rate per 1,000 <sup>1</sup> ---	
		Total population	Married women 15 years and over
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-----	594,000	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-----	361,000	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

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

Table 3. MEDIAN DURATION OF MARRIAGE PRIOR TO DIVORCE OR ANNULMENT: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1971-73

[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 1971, 1972, and 1973.]

Area	Median duration of marriage		
	1973	1972	1971
Divorce-registration area-----	6.6	6.7	6.7
Alabama-----	5.3	5.0	5.4
Alaska-----	5.3	5.6	5.2
California-----	6.9	6.9	6.9
Connecticut-----	8.4	8.1	8.7
Georgia-----	5.2	5.4	5.3
Hawaii-----	5.6	6.1	6.8
Idaho-----	4.5	4.7	5.0
Illinois-----	6.5	6.1	6.4
Iowa-----	5.6	5.9	5.8
Kansas-----	5.2	5.0	5.1
Kentucky-----	5.5	5.9	5.7
Maryland-----	9.0	8.6	8.6
Michigan-----	16.6	16.4	16.9
Missouri-----	5.4	5.4	5.5
Montana-----	4.8	5.1	5.3
Nebraska-----	5.7	6.3	6.2
New York-----	8.7	8.8	9.3
Ohio-----	6.2	6.3	6.5
Oregon-----	5.8	5.7	5.7
Pennsylvania-----	7.6	8.3	7.6
Rhode Island-----	8.4	8.2	8.7
South Carolina-----	6.9	7.0	7.1
South Dakota-----	5.9	5.9	5.8
Tennessee-----	5.2	5.6	5.5
Utah-----	4.8	4.9	4.7
Vermont-----	7.9	8.0	9.1
Virginia-----	7.9	7.8	8.3
Wisconsin-----	7.4	7.6	7.7
Wyoming-----	4.5	4.7	4.9

<sup>1</sup>Excludes data for Wayne County.

# MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

This report presents summary tabulations from the final divorce statistics for 1973. More detailed tabulations for 1973 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, 1954-73

[Refers only to events occurring within the United States. For 1960-73 estimated from frequencies based on sample; for all other years estimated from total counts.]

Year	Estimated number of children involved	Average number of children per decree	Year	Estimated number of children involved	Average number of children per decree
1973 <sup>1</sup>	1,079,000	1.17	1963 <sup>2</sup>	562,000	1.31
1972 <sup>1</sup>	1,021,000	1.20	1962 <sup>2</sup>	532,000	1.29
1971 <sup>1</sup>	946,000	1.22	1961 <sup>2</sup>	516,000	1.25
1970 <sup>1</sup>	870,000	1.22	1960	463,000	1.18
1969	840,000	1.31	1959	468,000	1.18
1968	784,000	1.34	1958	398,000	1.08
1967	701,000	1.34	1957	379,000	0.99
1966	689,000	1.34	1956	361,000	0.95
1965	630,000	1.32	1955	347,000	0.82
1964 <sup>2</sup>	613,000	1.36	1954	341,000	0.80

<sup>1</sup>Estimates are based on DRA frequencies instead of the 16 States previously used.  
<sup>2</sup>Revised.

Table 5. DIVORCES AND ANNULMENTS BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN REPORTED: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1973

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

Area	All divorces and annulments	Number of children reported						Not stated
		None	1	2	3	4	5 or more	
Divorce-registration area	537,943	207,936	131,174	97,556	46,009	19,006	11,738	24,524
Alabama	19,660	7,780	4,680	3,050	1,400	660	290	1,800
Alaska	2,060	865	468	399	173	74	41	40
California	116,300	43,700	27,140	21,190	9,190	3,200	1,710	10,170
Connecticut	8,076	2,598	1,978	1,602	826	376	234	462
Georgia	25,115	10,255	6,805	4,115	1,770	725	420	1,025
Hawaii	4,165	1,647	991	761	388	174	163	41
Idaho <sup>1</sup>	4,342	1,948	976	788	338	140	74	78
Illinois	45,760	17,510	10,940	7,920	4,180	1,880	1,350	1,980
Iowa	9,132	3,202	2,288	1,792	832	420	216	382
Kansas	10,502	4,272	2,660	1,990	924	366	200	90
Kentucky	13,025	5,420	3,395	1,995	1,025	420	260	510
Maryland	14,065	5,270	3,120	2,300	1,265	430	265	1,415
Michigan <sup>2</sup>	26,020	10,210	5,780	4,890	2,740	1,100	690	610
Missouri	21,670	9,420	5,805	3,710	1,535	660	390	130
Montana	3,729	1,465	907	716	340	131	95	77
Nebraska	4,914	1,946	1,254	898	454	206	150	6
New York	47,740	18,480	10,520	9,210	4,270	1,870	1,150	2,230
Ohio	47,810	18,190	12,120	9,040	4,610	2,080	1,380	390
Oregon	12,340	4,705	2,950	2,275	955	365	205	865
Pennsylvania	31,030	10,960	8,300	6,100	2,660	1,130	740	1,120
Rhode Island	2,402	728	589	539	282	130	95	59
South Carolina	8,264	3,452	2,242	1,439	686	270	124	72
South Dakota	1,708	615	437	336	164	83	71	2
Tennessee	22,095	9,610	5,710	3,645	1,505	565	380	480
Utah	5,138	1,842	1,200	922	502	242	150	280
Vermont	1,563	467	363	310	190	92	80	61
Virginia	16,060	6,535	4,250	2,925	1,460	510	330	70
Wisconsin	10,996	3,666	2,714	2,316	1,220	606	442	32
Wyoming	2,242	948	552	384	185	81	45	47

<sup>1</sup>Data are for number of children affected by decree.

<sup>2</sup>Excludes data for Wayne County.

# MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

## 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 1961-73 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 all 29 registration States in 1971-73.

### SAMPLING ERROR OF ESTIMATED FREQUENCY EXPRESSED AS PERCENTAGE OF AREA TOTAL: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA, 1971-73 AND THE 29 REGISTRATION STATES, 1973

[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
<b>Divorce-registration area:</b>				
1973 (29 States)-----	197	593	856	988
1972 (29 States)-----	189	569	821	948
1971 (29 States)-----	176	532	767	886
<b>Registration States, 1973:</b>				
Alabama-----	43	129	186	215
Alaska-----	...	...	...	...
California-----	102	309	446	514
Connecticut-----	9	27	39	45
Georgia-----	31	95	137	158
Hawaii-----	...	...	...	...
Idaho-----	7	20	29	33
Illinois-----	63	191	276	318
Iowa-----	10	29	41	48
Kansas-----	10	31	44	51
Kentucky-----	23	69	99	114
Maryland-----	24	71	103	119
Michigan-----	74	223	322	372
Missouri-----	29	89	128	148
Montana-----	...	...	...	...
Nebraska-----	7	21	30	35
New York-----	65	197	284	328
Ohio-----	65	197	285	329
Oregon-----	22	67	96	111
Pennsylvania-----	53	159	229	264
Rhode Island-----	...	...	...	...
South Carolina-----	9	27	39	45
South Dakota-----	...	...	...	...
Tennessee-----	30	89	129	149
Utah-----	7	22	32	37
Vermont-----	...	...	...	...
Virginia-----	25	76	110	127
Wisconsin-----	11	33	48	55
Wyoming-----	...	...	...	...

### Divorce Samples

Sample data used to estimate the 1973 frequencies in table 5 and the frequencies used to compute median duration of marriage for 1971-73 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 1973 data and only for the divorce-registration area for 1971 and 1972 data.

### SYMBOLS USED IN TABLES

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

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