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VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Advance Report

Final Marriage Statistics, 1976

FROM THE
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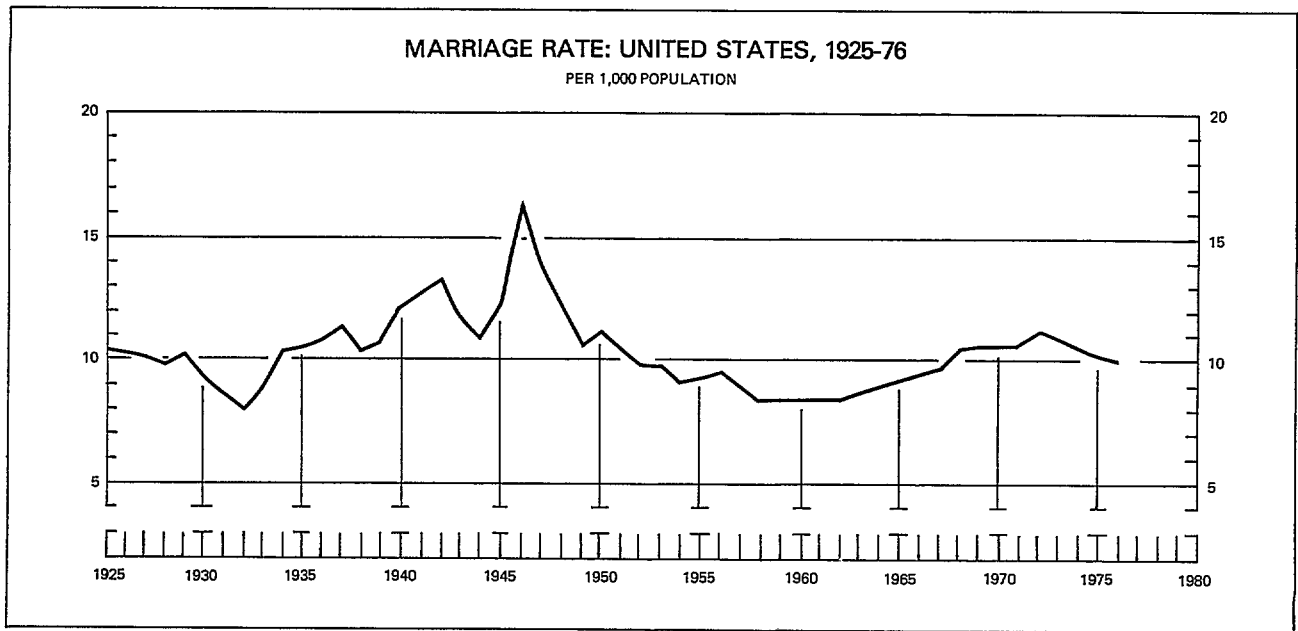
The number of marriages performed in the United States increased slightly in 1976, after declining for two consecutive years. There were 2,154,807 marriages, representing an increase of 2,145 over the total for 1975. From 1.5 million marriages in 1958, marriages increased every year for 15 years, to 2.3 million in 1973. Following this long consistent upward trend, the number of marriages declined in 1974 and again in 1975. According to provisional data, the slight increase in 1976 was followed by a larger increase in 1977.

Despite the increase in the number of marriages, the marriage rate declined for the fourth consecutive year. The marriage rate for 1976 was 10.0 per 1,000 population, slightly below the rate of 10.1 for 1975. The rate had declined

to this level from 11.0 in 1972, the peak rate of the 25-year period from 1951 to 1976.

The marriage rate for unmarried women also declined for the fourth consecutive year. The rate per 1,000 unmarried women 15 years and over was 65.2 in 1976, down 2.5 percent from the rate for 1975 (66.9) and 18.5 percent below the peak rate of the past 20 years (80.0 in 1969). In fact, these rates for 1975 and 1976 were below the rates for all other years of the period for which comparable figures are available (1940-74). The rate relating all marriages to unmarried women 15-44 years of age, the ages where most marriages occur, shows the same pattern.

The marriage rate showed the usual regional variation—highest in the West and South Regions



and lowest in the Northeast Region. The rate was lower in 1976 than in 1975 for three of the four regions—Northeast, North Central, and West. It increased slightly in the South Region.

Marriage rates by age, sex, and previous marital status are based on data from a sample of marriage certificates from the marriage-registration area (MRA), which has been comprised of 41 States and the District of Columbia since 1971. Typically, the first marriage rate for women has been about one-fifth higher than that for men, while the remarriage rate for men has been more than 3 times the rate for women. Of all marital status groups, divorced men have had the highest rate of marriage and widowed women have had the lowest. In recent years the marriage rate for widowers has been more than 4 times the rate for widows, and the marriage rate for divorced men has been two-thirds greater than that for divorced women. This pattern of marriage continued to prevail in 1976.

Since 1971 a marked decline has occurred in the marriage rate for each marital status group. For both men and women, the rate of first marriage declined by 22 percent, from 67.9 per 1,000 single men in 1971 to 53.1 in 1976 and from 82.8 per 1,000 single women in 1971 to 64.8 in 1976. Among previously married persons, the remarriage rate declined most for divorced men (down 20 percent from 230.7 per 1,000 in 1971 to 185.0 in 1976) and least for widowers (down 12 percent from 42.5 in 1971 to 37.6 in 1976). In the same period, the remarriage rate declined by 16 percent for divorced women, from 132.8 per 1,000 to 111.3, and by 18 percent for widows, from 9.6 to 7.9.

In 1976 the first marriage rates for men and women under 30 continued the strong downward trend initiated in 1973. Similarly consistent declines in marriage rates have occurred over the last 4 years for divorced men and women in the age groups 25-44 and 45-64 years. The rates for divorced men and women under 25 years of age increased in 1976, reversing the previously downward trend for this age group. The rates in

most other age, sex, marital status groups tended to fluctuate, with no discernable trends either up or down.

In recent years, according to data from the MRA, notable changes have occurred in the distribution of marriages by previous marital status. Between 1971 and 1976 the proportion of marriages involving previously single brides declined from 76 to 69 percent, while the proportion involving single grooms declined from 75 to 67 percent. Over the same 6-year period, the proportion of persons marrying in the MRA who were previously divorced increased from 19 to 26 percent for women and from 21 to 29 percent for men. These figures assume that the marriages for which previous marital status was not stated were distributed the same as those for which it was stated.

The median age at first marriage increased in 1976 to 21.0 years for brides and 22.9 years for grooms. The median ages at first marriage remained almost constant from the midsixties to 1974, fluctuating very little around a median age of 20.5 years for brides and of 22.5 years for grooms. In contrast, as a result of the increasing proportion of remarrying persons who were previously divorced and therefore were generally younger than their widowed counterparts, the median age at remarriage continued the downward trend of the past decade.

Between 1971 and 1976 the median age of previously widowed brides rose from 51.8 to 53.0 years and that of previously widowed grooms rose from 59.1 to 60.0 years. Over the same 6-year period, the median age of previously divorced women decreased slightly, from 30.2 to 30.1 years, while that of previously divorced grooms declined from 34.1 to 33.7 years.

The statistics for the marriage-registration area presented in this report are based on sample data and consequently are subject to sampling variability as well as other sources of error. Further discussion of sampling variability appears in the Technical Notes.

Table 1. MARRIAGES AND MARRIAGE RATES: UNITED STATES, 1958-76

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

Year	Marriages	Rate per 1,000 ¹ —		
		Total population	Unmarried women 15 years and over	Unmarried women 15-44 years
1976.....	2,154,807	10.0	65.2	113.4
1975.....	2,152,662	10.1	66.9	118.5
1974.....	2,229,667	10.5	72.0	128.4
1973.....	2,284,108	10.9	76.0	137.3
1972.....	2,282,154	11.0	77.9	141.3
1971.....	2,190,481	10.6	76.2	138.9
1970.....	2,158,802	10.6	76.5	140.2
1969.....	2,145,000	10.6	80.0	149.1
1968.....	2,069,000	10.4	79.1	147.2
1967.....	1,927,000	9.7	76.4	145.2
1966.....	1,857,000	9.5	75.6	145.1
1965.....	1,800,000	9.3	75.0	144.3
1964.....	1,725,000	9.0	74.6	146.2
1963.....	1,654,000	8.8	73.4	143.3
1962.....	1,577,000	8.5	71.2	138.4
1961.....	1,548,000	8.5	72.2	145.4
1960.....	1,523,000	8.5	73.5	148.0
1959.....	1,494,000	8.5	73.6	149.8
1958.....	1,451,000	8.4	72.0	146.3

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

SYMBOLS

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

This report represents summary tabulations from the final marriage statistics for 1976. More detailed tabulations for 1976 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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Table 2. MARRIAGES AND MARRIAGE RATES: UNITED STATES, EACH REGION, DIVISION, AND STATE, 1974-76

[By place of occurrence. Data are counts of marriages performed except as noted. Rates per 1,000 population in each area, estimated as of July 1]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate			Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1976	1975	1974	1976	1975	1974		1976	1975	1974	1976	1975	1974
United States.....	2,154,807	2,152,662	2,229,667	10.0	10.1	10.5	West North Central:						
Northeast.....	374,297	384,186	402,521	7.6	7.8	8.1	Minnesota.....	2 ^{32,034}	32,261	33,547	² 8.1	8.2	8.6
North Central.....	544,351	549,356	574,059	9.4	9.5	10.0	Iowa.....	25,727	25,616	27,209	9.0	8.9	9.5
South.....	792,837	776,727	803,369	11.5	11.4	12.0	Missouri.....	51,070	50,147	51,434	10.7	10.5	10.8
West.....	443,322	442,393	449,718	11.5	11.7	12.1	North Dakota.....	5,650	5,993	5,905	8.8	9.4	9.3
							South Dakota.....	10,781	11,074	11,928	15.7	16.2	17.5
							Nebraska.....	13,431	13,087	13,873	8.6	8.5	9.0
							Kansas.....	23,559	23,767	24,491	10.2	10.5	10.8
							South Atlantic:						
Northeast:							Delaware.....	3,943	3,944	4,143	6.8	6.8	7.2
New England.....	95,596	96,761	101,397	7.8	7.9	8.3	Maryland.....	44,616	44,776	47,013	10.8	10.9	11.5
Middle Atlantic.....	278,701	287,425	301,124	7.5	7.7	8.1	District of Columbia.....	4,611	4,911	5,271	6.6	6.9	7.3
North Central:							Virginia.....	56,469	54,688	56,617	11.2	11.0	11.5
East North Central..	382,099	387,411	405,672	9.3	9.5	9.9	West Virginia.....	17,229	17,041	17,409	9.5	9.5	9.7
West North Central..	162,252	161,945	168,387	9.7	9.7	10.1	North Carolina.....	42,475	42,310	45,015	7.8	7.8	8.4
South:							South Carolina.....	50,698	50,249	52,996	17.8	17.8	19.0
South Atlantic.....	372,134	366,591	385,457	10.9	10.9	11.6	Georgia.....	65,950	63,245	66,656	13.3	12.8	13.7
East South Central..	159,488	155,226	161,830	11.7	11.5	12.1	Florida.....	86,143	85,427	90,337	10.2	10.2	11.2
West South Central..	261,215	254,910	¹ 256,082	12.3	12.2	¹ 12.4	East South Central:						
West:							Kentucky.....	32,931	32,068	32,800	9.6	9.4	9.8
Mountain.....	216,208	212,045	213,654	22.0	22.0	22.7	Tennessee.....	53,270	51,530	54,606	12.6	12.3	13.2
Pacific.....	227,114	230,348	236,064	7.9	8.2	8.5	Alabama.....	46,515	45,349	46,811	12.7	12.5	13.1
							Mississippi.....	26,772	26,279	27,613	11.4	11.2	11.9
							West South Central:						
New England:							Arkansas.....	24,913	24,337	¹ 24,735	11.8	11.5	¹ 12.0
Maine.....	11,302	11,190	11,546	10.6	10.6	11.0	Louisiana.....	37,999	37,309	38,185	9.9	9.8	10.1
New Hampshire.....	8,550	8,831	9,239	10.4	10.8	11.4	Oklahoma.....	40,983	40,110	40,160	14.8	14.8	14.8
Vermont.....	4,396	4,553	4,652	9.2	9.7	9.9	Texas.....	157,320	153,154	153,002	12.6	12.5	12.7
Massachusetts.....	41,501	42,103	44,243	7.1	7.2	7.6	Mountain:						
Rhode Island.....	6,905	6,695	7,255	7.4	7.2	7.7	Montana.....	7,390	7,331	7,741	9.8	9.8	10.5
Connecticut.....	22,942	23,389	24,462	7.4	7.6	7.9	Idaho.....	13,104	12,688	12,489	15.8	15.5	15.6
Middle Atlantic:							Wyoming.....	5,862	5,649	6,048	15.0	15.1	16.8
New York.....	136,968	142,752	148,012	7.6	7.9	8.2	Colorado.....	28,601	27,565	25,999	11.1	10.9	10.4
New Jersey.....	51,291	53,008	56,449	7.0	7.2	7.7	New Mexico.....	15,616	15,790	15,886	13.4	13.8	14.2
Pennsylvania.....	90,442	91,665	96,663	7.6	7.8	8.2	Arizona.....	26,534	26,558	³ 27,038	11.7	11.9	³ 12.6
							Utah.....	14,693	14,905	15,166	12.0	12.4	12.9
							Nevada.....	⁴ 104,408	101,559	103,287	⁴ 171.2	171.6	180.3
East North Central:							Pacific:						
Ohio.....	96,776	101,135	102,458	9.1	9.4	9.5	Washington.....	41,986	41,807	41,577	11.6	11.8	12.0
Indiana.....	55,699	56,075	60,524	10.5	10.6	11.4	Oregon.....	19,182	19,322	20,002	8.2	8.4	8.8
Illinois.....	110,847	111,459	116,419	9.9	10.0	10.5	California ⁵	151,284	154,812	160,887	7.0	7.3	7.7
Michigan.....	82,753	82,856	88,023	9.1	9.0	9.7	Alaska.....	4,893	4,734	3,949	12.8	13.4	11.7
Wisconsin.....	36,024	35,886	38,248	7.8	7.8	8.4	Hawaii.....	9,769	9,673	9,649	11.0	11.2	11.4

¹Data are incomplete.

²Data are estimated.

³Includes marriage licenses issued for some counties.

⁴Marriage licenses issued.

⁵Data exclude 10,555 nonlicensed marriages registered in 1974; 19,061 registered in 1975; and 30,125 registered in 1976.

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Table 3. MARRIAGES AND MARRIAGE RATES BY AGE AND PREVIOUS MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN AND MEN: MARRIAGE-REGISTRATION AREA,¹ 1975-76

[By place of occurrence. Based on sample data. Rates per 1,000 population in specified group, estimated as of July 1 of each year. Figures for age not stated are distributed]

Age and previous marital status	Women				Men			
	Number		Rate ²		Number		Rate ²	
	1976	1975	1976	1975	1976	1975	1976	1975
ALL MARRIAGES								
Total.....	1,706,628	1,718,641	55.1	56.9	1,706,628	1,718,641	66.6	68.8
14-17 years.....	142,059	156,999	20.3	22.3	23,938	26,073	3.2	3.5
18-19 years.....	324,033	344,006	110.1	119.6	179,431	196,941	52.4	58.5
20-24 years.....	621,975	620,230	148.2	157.5	651,843	667,434	121.5	129.6
25-44 years.....	501,343	478,013	109.2	113.5	682,036	657,129	141.2	146.3
25-29 years.....	263,086	247,719	143.3	152.7	361,335	348,971	156.0	168.1
30-34 years.....	120,182	114,370	114.1	114.1	163,405	155,645	143.0	145.6
35-44 years.....	118,075	115,924	69.4	73.0	157,296	152,513	114.8	113.4
45-64 years.....	100,773	102,389	20.8	20.6	137,844	139,014	53.7	52.7
65 years and over.....	16,445	17,004	2.2	2.4	31,536	32,050	15.6	16.8
FIRST MARRIAGES								
Total.....	1,162,528	1,190,562	64.8	68.1	1,132,320	1,169,029	53.1	56.0
14-17 years.....	138,399	152,757	19.8	21.7	23,494	25,601	3.2	3.4
18-19 years.....	307,282	328,460	105.1	115.0	174,664	193,042	51.0	57.4
20-24 years.....	521,199	524,501	133.4	143.8	591,069	610,682	113.0	121.7
25-44 years.....	185,277	174,219	81.8	81.7	327,089	321,926	91.7	96.7
25-29 years.....	135,086	126,243	109.1	114.6	237,833	232,833	119.8	132.3
30-34 years.....	31,855	30,950	67.2	62.4	58,706	58,561	72.8	78.2
35-44 years.....	18,336	17,026	30.0	31.8	30,550	30,532	39.3	37.2
45-64 years.....	9,440	9,667	9.3	9.2	14,415	16,305	12.4	13.0
65 years and over.....	931	958	1.1	1.2	1,589	1,473	3.1	3.0
REMARRIAGES								
Total.....	518,140	509,643	39.7	40.1	549,665	532,998	127.6	129.8
14-19 years.....	12,214	13,356	*	*	1,744	1,830	*	*
20-24 years.....	90,292	87,727	³ 324.4	³ 319.9	49,753	48,687	³ 384.3	³ 371.4
25-44 years.....	310,023	300,393	133.2	144.5	346,664	329,808	274.5	284.1
25-29 years.....	124,389	119,266	208.0	229.4	118,486	112,639	358.0	356.5
30-34 years.....	86,987	82,842	150.2	163.7	102,869	96,045	305.2	300.1
35-44 years.....	98,647	98,285	86.0	93.5	125,309	121,124	211.7	231.2
45-64 years.....	90,303	92,186	23.5	23.5	121,971	122,206	86.8	88.0
65 years and over.....	15,308	15,981	2.3	2.5	29,533	30,467	19.6	21.5
Previously widowed ⁴	64,357	67,906	7.9	8.3	57,955	62,343	37.6	40.4
14-24 years.....	2,220	2,554	*	*	423	494	*	*
25-44 years.....	16,422	18,687	⁵ 56.0	⁵ 61.7	8,783	9,730	⁵ 204.6	⁵ 173.3
45-64 years.....	34,110	35,200	15.2	14.9	28,605	31,779	68.9	71.4
65 years and over.....	11,605	11,465	2.1	2.1	20,144	20,340	18.6	19.5

See footnotes at end of table.

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Table 3. MARRIAGES AND MARRIAGE RATES BY AGE AND PREVIOUS MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN AND MEN: MARRIAGE-REGISTRATION AREA,¹ 1975-76—Con.

[By place of occurrence. Based on sample data. Rates per 1,000 population in specified group, estimated as of July 1 of each year. Figures for age not stated are distributed]

Age and previous marital status	Women				Men			
	Number		Rate ²		Number		Rate ²	
	1976	1975	1976	1975	1976	1975	1976	1975
REMARRIAGES—con.								
Previously divorced ⁴	377,388	365,237	111.3	117.2	410,988	391,453	185.0	189.8
14-19 years.....	10,300	10,711	*	*	1,403	1,530	*	*
20-24 years.....	74,218	71,425	³ 339.4	³ 319.6	41,301	39,341	³ 391.8	³ 368.2
25-44 years.....	248,079	236,641	144.0	158.6	286,988	270,692	270.2	278.2
45-64 years.....	42,889	43,998	37.5	40.1	75,368	73,855	91.5	94.0
65 years and over.....	1,902	2,462	6.9	9.1	5,928	6,035	26.1	31.4
Not stated if widowed or divorced ⁶ ..	76,395	76,500	...	...	80,722	79,202	...	...
NOT STATED IF PREVIOUSLY MARRIED⁷	25,960	18,436	...	...	24,643	16,614	...	...

¹In 1975 and 1976 the MRA consisted of the District of Columbia and all the States in the Union except 9; Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington. It covered around 80 percent of the marriages registered in the United States. Sampling errors of estimates for the MRA appear in the Technical Notes.

²Base populations exclude persons under 14 years of age. Rates for all marriages are based on the unmarried population; for first marriages, on the never-married population; and for remarriages, on the widowed and divorced populations.

³Rates are shown for ages 14-24 years.

⁴Data exclude remarriages in Michigan, Ohio, and South Carolina.

⁵Rates are shown for ages 14-44 years.

⁶Data include all remarriages in Michigan, Ohio, and South Carolina.

⁷Figures are included in all marriages.

Table 4. MEDIAN AGES OF BRIDE AND GROOM BY PREVIOUS MARITAL STATUS, 1963-76

Year	Median age of bride			Median age of groom		
	Total	First marriage	Remarriage	Total	First marriage	Remarriage
1976.....	22.7	21.0	31.7	25.0	22.9	35.1
1975.....	22.4	20.8	32.0	24.7	22.7	35.5
1974.....	22.0	20.6	32.1	24.2	22.5	35.7
1973.....	21.9	20.6	32.3	24.1	22.5	36.3
1972.....	21.7	20.5	32.8	23.8	22.4	36.5
1971.....	21.7	20.5	32.9	23.7	22.5	36.9
1970.....	21.7	20.6	33.3	23.6	22.5	37.5
1969.....	21.6	20.6	33.8	23.5	22.4	38.2
1968.....	21.5	20.6	33.8	23.6	22.4	38.3
1967.....	21.4	20.5	35.0	23.8	22.6	39.1
1966.....	21.5	20.3	35.2	23.8	22.6	39.2
1965.....	21.4	20.4	35.5	23.6	22.5	39.6
1964.....	21.4	20.4	35.6	23.6	22.4	39.7
1963.....	21.3	20.3	35.6	23.7	22.5	39.8

TECHNICAL NOTES

Place and Time of Occurrence

Marriages are those performed during the year. Marriages and marriage rates for States and other areas are by place of occurrence. In table 2, however, figures for marriages shown for some States are by place and date the marriage license was issued.

Sources of Data

Figures in tables 1 and 2 are based on totals reported by States and counties. All other figures in the tables are based on data tabulated from State-coded data tapes and from probability samples of records selected and coded in the National Center for Health Statistics from copies of the records sent in by States participating in the marriage-registration area (MRA). For 1974, 1975, and 1976, 41 States and the District of Columbia participated.

Marriage Sample

Ten States—Florida, Maine, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York (except New York City), Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, and Virginia—supplied State-coded data tapes of all their marriage records through the Cooperative Health Statistics System, and 100 percent of these records were used by NCHS. For all other States in the MRA, records were sampled at different rates designed to give a sample of at least 2,500 for each State. For two States—Alaska and Delaware—where totals of less than 5,000 marriages had been anticipated, and for New York City, all records were included in the sample. One-half of all records were included from 4 States and the District of Columbia, one-fifth from 6 States, one-tenth from 10 States, and one-twentieth from 9 States. The total sample size, including records supplied through the Cooperative Health Statistics System, was 549,614 marriages. Sampling errors shown in the following table are for

APPROXIMATE SAMPLING ERRORS OF ESTIMATED NUMBERS OF MARRIAGES SHOWN IN TABLE 3: MARRIAGE-REGISTRATION AREA, 1975-76

Percent of total MRA marriages in subclass	1976 sampling error	1975 sampling error
1 or 99.....	424	448
2 or 98.....	597	631
3 or 97.....	728	768
4 or 96.....	836	883
5 or 95.....	930	982
7 or 93.....	1,088	1,149
10 or 90.....	1,279	1,351
15 or 85.....	1,523	1,608
20 or 80.....	1,706	1,802
25 or 75.....	1,847	1,950
50.....	2,132	2,252

How to use the Sampling Error table

Total numbers of MRA marriages in 1975 and 1976 were 1,718,641 and 1,706,628, respectively. For any estimate of marriage shown in table 3, determine its ratio to total MRA marriages for the corresponding year. Then look in the appropriate row on the table of sampling errors for the percentage figures closest to the estimate to determine the sampling error for that year. For example, in 1976 there were an estimated 377,388 marriages to women who had been previously divorced, or 22.1 percent of all 1976 MRA marriages. Since 22.1 percent is between 20 and 25 percent, the 1976 sampling error is between 1,706 and 1,847, or by interpolation, about 1,765 marriages. Chances are about 68 out of 100 that the actual number of 1976 marriages to divorcees is between 375,623 and 379,153 (377,388 \pm 1,765).

frequencies which equal a specified percent of the total MRA marriages for either 1975 or 1976.

Sampling Errors

All statistics for the MRA are estimates based on the systematic sample of marriages described above; therefore, these statistics are subject to sampling errors. A sampling error is a measure of variations that occur by chance between sample estimates and the actual quantity being estimated. Chances are about 68 out of 100 that an estimate would differ from the true value by less than the sampling error, and about 95 out of 100 that the difference would be less than twice the sampling error.