

Monthly

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
Public Health Service
Office of Health Research, Statistics, and Technology
National Center for Health Statistics
3700 East-West Highway
Hyattsville, Maryland 20782



DHEW PUBLICATION NO.
(PHS) 79-1120
VOL. 28, NO. 2
SUPPLEMENT
MAY 16, 1979

VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

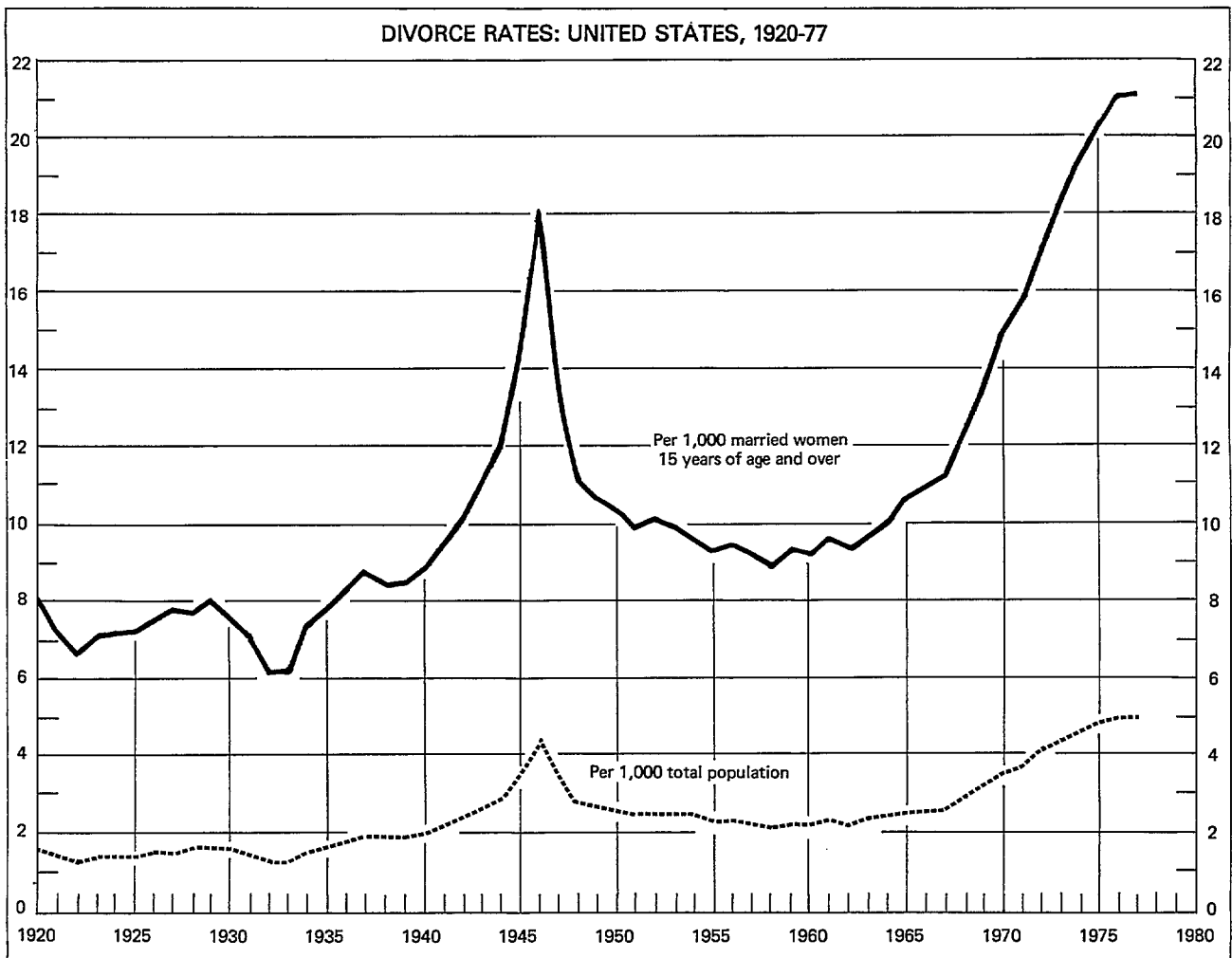
Advance Report

Final Divorce Statistics, 1977

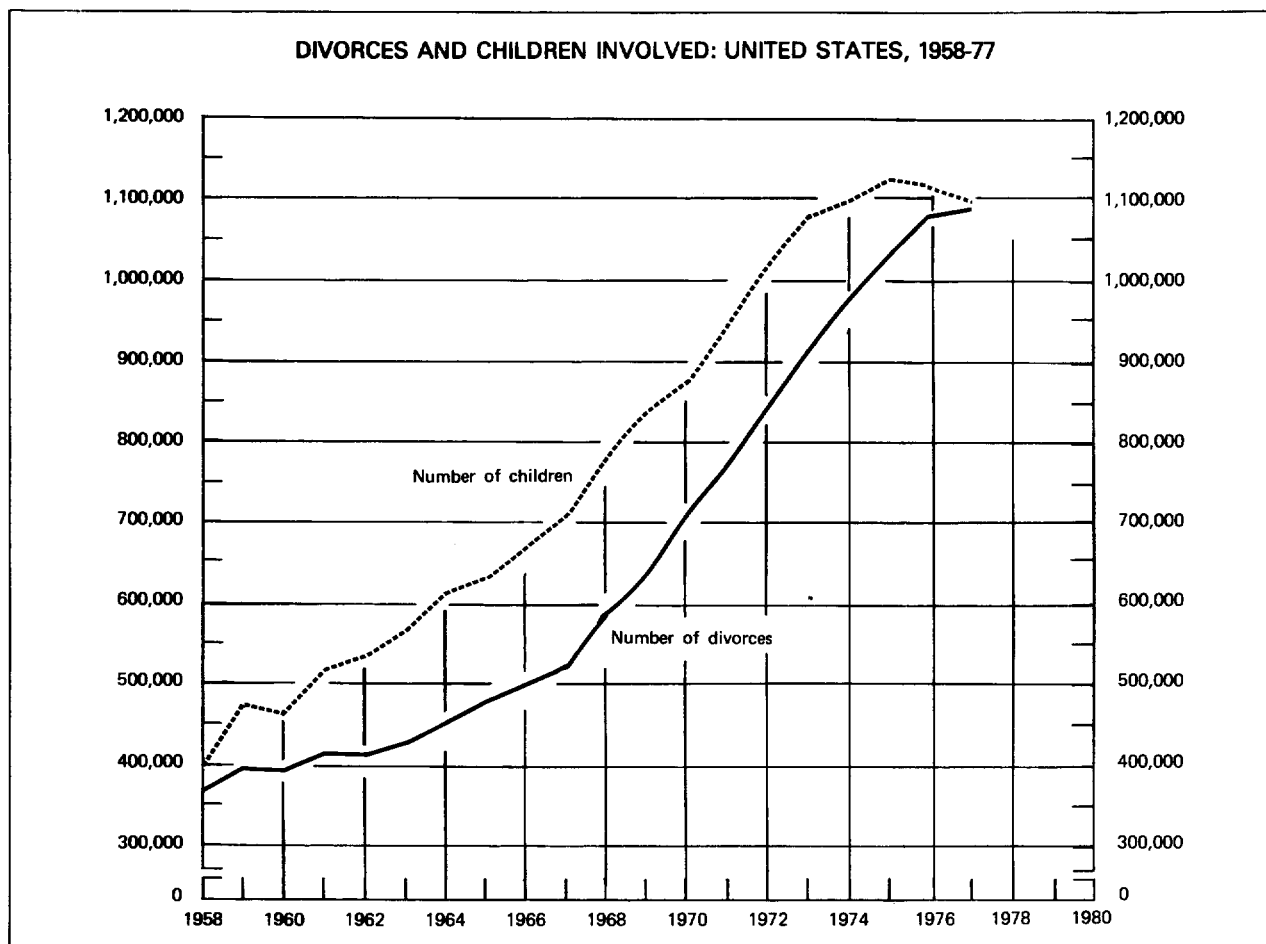
FROM THE
NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

During 1977 an estimated 1,091,000 divorces were granted in the United States. This total was less than 1 percent greater than that for 1976 (1,083,000), representing the smallest annual increase in the number of divorces since 1962.

The national divorce rate for 1977 was 5.0 per 1,000 population, the same as the rate for 1976. The last year in which the rate did not increase was 1966, when the rate was 2.5, the same as in 1965. The rate thus ceased to grow in 1977, remaining at a level twice that recorded



MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT



11 years earlier. However, provisional data for 1978 indicate an increase of 2 percent over the final rate for 1977.

The divorce rate for married women also remained unchanged. In both 1976 and 1977 this rate was 21.1 per 1,000 married women 15 years of age and over. Until 1977 this rate had increased every year since 1962, when it stood at 9.4 per 1,000 married women.

In three regions of the United States the divorce rate leveled off, while in a fourth region, the West, there was a downturn. This represented the first decline in any regional rate since 1962, when the rates declined slightly in both the North Central and the South Regions.

Information about characteristics of divorces is available only from States that participate in the divorce-registration area (DRA). Since 1971 the DRA has included 29 States. The number of

divorces granted in the DRA in 1977 was 656,339, or 60 percent of the national total.

For the DRA in 1977 the median duration of marriages ending in divorce was 6.6 years, up slightly from the 6.5 years for 1975 and 1976. The figure for 1977 represented the first annual increase in the median duration since 1963, when a figure of 7.5 years was recorded for the DRA.

According to data on ages of divorcing spouses obtained from the DRA, the proportion of persons aged 25-39 years continued to increase. Of those divorcing in 1977 for whom age was reported, 57 percent of the husbands were aged 25-39 years compared with 56 percent in 1976 and 51 percent in 1971, and 54 percent of the wives were aged 25-39 years compared with 53 percent in 1976 and 47 percent in 1971. In 1977 the proportions of

spouses under 25 years of age at time of decree declined to 16 percent for divorcing husbands and 26 percent for divorcing wives; these compare with 18 percent of divorcing husbands and 29 percent of divorcing wives in 1971. There were similar declines in the percentages for spouses over 39 years of age at time of decree.

Based on data reported by States in the DRA, the total number of children under 18 years of age involved in divorce is estimated annually for the United States. The estimate for

1977 was 1,095,000, a 2-percent decline from the 1976 estimate (1,117,000). This was the second consecutive decline in the annual number of children affected by divorce, which prior to 1976 has increased each year since 1960.

In 1977 the average number of children per divorce continued to decline, falling to a level of 1.00. Of the couples divorced in the DRA during 1977, 45 percent reported that no children under 18 years of age were involved in the divorce, while 11 percent re-

Table 1. DIVORCES AND RATES: UNITED STATES, EACH REGION, DIVISION, AND STATE, 1975-77

[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, 1975, 1976, and 1977.]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate			Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1977	1976	1975	1977	1976	1975		1977	1976	1975	1977	1976	1975
United States.....	¹ 1,091,000	1,083,000	¹ 1,036,000	¹ 5.0	5.0	¹ 4.9	West North Central:						
Regions:							Minnesota.....	14,020	⁴ 13,822	13,188	3.5	⁴ 3.5	3.4
Northeast.....	159,000	156,000	153,000	3.2	3.2	3.1	Iowa.....	10,890	10,817	10,304	3.8	3.8	3.6
North Central.....	271,000	273,000	¹ 261,000	4.7	4.7	¹ 4.5	Missouri.....	25,235	25,414	24,527	5.3	5.3	5.1
South.....	¹ 400,000	394,000	¹ 374,000	¹ 5.7	5.7	¹ 5.5	North Dakota.....	1,952	1,861	1,713	3.0	2.9	2.7
West.....	261,000	260,000	248,000	6.6	6.7	6.5	South Dakota.....	2,436	2,350	2,228	3.5	3.4	3.3
							Nebraska.....	6,112	5,862	5,570	3.9	3.8	3.6
							Kansas.....	12,629	12,833	12,559	5.4	5.6	5.5
Northeast:							South Atlantic:						
New England.....	44,353	43,722	43,182	3.6	3.6	3.5	Delaware.....	3,030	3,233	2,761	5.2	5.6	4.8
Middle Atlantic.....	114,164	112,576	110,013	3.1	3.0	3.0	Maryland.....	16,617	16,101	15,398	4.0	3.9	3.8
North Central:							District of Columbia..	3,158	3,092	3,789	4.6	4.4	5.3
East North Central ² ..	197,254	189,938	186,205	4.8	4.9	*	Virginia.....	21,459	21,381	19,491	4.2	4.2	3.9
West North Central....	73,274	72,959	70,089	4.3	4.3	4.2	West Virginia.....	9,605	8,893	8,632	5.2	4.9	4.8
South:							North Carolina.....	25,013	24,327	22,107	4.5	4.4	4.1
South Atlantic.....	182,957	182,047	174,778	5.3	5.4	5.2	South Carolina.....	10,717	10,641	9,671	3.7	3.7	3.4
East South Central....	79,467	79,328	74,423	5.7	5.8	5.5	Georgia.....	30,988	31,156	29,483	6.1	6.3	6.0
West South Central ² ..	136,203	132,309	122,783	*	6.2	*	Florida.....	62,370	63,223	63,446	7.4	7.5	7.6
West:							East South Central:						
Mountain.....	77,278	75,534	70,721	7.7	7.7	7.3	Kentucky.....	15,530	16,027	14,508	4.5	4.7	4.3
Pacific.....	183,426	184,888	177,032	6.3	6.4	6.3	Tennessee.....	27,421	27,002	24,611	6.4	6.4	5.9
							Alabama.....	23,757	24,056	23,001	6.4	6.6	6.4
New England:							Mississippi.....	12,759	12,243	12,303	5.3	5.2	5.2
Maine.....	5,671	5,540	5,543	5.2	5.2	5.2	West South Central:						
New Hampshire.....	4,417	4,322	4,241	5.2	5.3	5.2	Arkansas ²	19,222	18,365	16,737	9.0	8.7	7.9
Vermont.....	2,131	1,905	1,921	4.4	4.0	4.1	Louisiana ²	12,910	12,550	8,720	*	3.3	*
Massachusetts.....	16,492	16,974	16,581	2.9	2.9	2.8	Oklahoma.....	21,806	21,489	20,641	7.8	7.8	7.6
Rhode Island.....	3,420	3,276	2,658	3.7	3.5	2.9	Texas.....	82,265	79,905	76,685	6.4	6.4	6.3
Connecticut.....	12,222	11,705	12,238	3.9	3.8	4.0	Mountain:						
Middle Atlantic:							Montana.....	4,692	4,850	4,286	6.2	6.4	5.7
New York.....	55,803	54,229	55,612	3.1	3.0	3.1	Idaho.....	6,013	5,699	5,203	7.0	6.9	6.3
New Jersey.....	20,493	21,816	19,446	2.8	3.0	2.7	Wyoming.....	3,068	2,850	2,835	7.6	7.3	7.6
Pennsylvania.....	37,868	36,531	34,955	3.2	3.1	3.0	Colorado.....	20,557	17,520	15,733	7.8	6.8	6.2
East North Central:							New Mexico.....	9,143	9,118	8,413	7.7	7.8	7.3
Ohio.....	57,266	59,251	52,626	5.4	5.5	4.9	Arizona.....	16,578	19,029	17,577	7.2	8.4	7.9
Indiana ²	³ 33,338	31,193	28,755	³ 6.3	5.9	*	Utah.....	6,947	6,170	6,132	5.5	5.0	5.1
Illinois.....	48,980	51,810	50,954	4.4	4.6	4.6	Nevada.....	10,280	10,296	10,542	16.2	16.9	17.8
Michigan.....	43,036	43,101	40,782	4.7	4.7	4.5	Pacific:						
Wisconsin.....	14,634	14,583	13,088	3.1	3.2	2.8	Washington.....	26,679	27,072	25,848	7.3	7.5	7.3
							Oregon.....	16,372	16,070	15,562	6.9	6.9	6.8
							California.....	132,193	133,824	128,492	6.0	6.2	6.1
							Alaska.....	3,581	3,210	2,865	8.8	8.4	8.1
							Hawaii.....	4,601	4,712	4,265	5.1	5.3	4.9

¹ Figures include estimates.

² Data are incomplete.

³ Data include divorce petitions filed for some counties.

⁴ Data are estimated.

ported that 3 children or more were involved. In 1964, when the average number of children per decree was highest, data for the DRA showed that 37 percent of all divorcing couples reported no children under 18 years of age, and 20 percent reported 3 children or more involved.

The rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age relates the number of children involved in divorce in a given year to the total number of children under 18 in the population that year.

Table 2. DIVORCES AND ANNULMENTS AND RATES: UNITED STATES, 1950-77

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

Year	Divorces and annulments	Rate per 1,000 ¹ —	
		Total population	Married women 15 years and over
1977.....	1,091,000	5.0	21.1
1976.....	1,083,000	5.0	21.1
1975.....	1,036,000	4.9	20.3
1974.....	977,000	4.6	19.3
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.....	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

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

In 1977 this rate was 17.0, declining for the first time since 1960, when a rate of 7.2 was reported. The rate increased each year after 1960, reaching a level of 17.1 in 1976.

The statistics for the DRA presented in this report are based on sample data and consequently are subject to sampling variability. Further discussion of sampling variability appears in the Technical Notes.

Table 3. MEDIAN DURATION OF MARRIAGE PRIOR TO DIVORCE OR ANNULMENT: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1975-77

[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 1975, 1976, and 1977]

Area	Median duration of marriage		
	1977	1976	1975
Divorce-registration area.....	6.6	6.5	6.5
Alabama	4.9	4.8	4.7
Alaska.....	5.0	5.2	5.1
California.....	7.0	6.9	6.8
Connecticut.....	8.3	8.2	8.2
Georgia.....	5.3	5.3	5.2
Hawaii.....	5.7	5.4	5.4
Idaho.....	5.0	4.6	4.8
Illinois.....	6.2	6.1	6.1
Iowa.....	5.8	5.7	5.5
Kansas.....	5.2	5.0	5.2
Kentucky.....	5.6	5.6	5.9
Maryland.....	8.4	7.9	8.3
Michigan.....	7.0	6.6	6.8
Missouri.....	5.5	5.7	5.6
Montana.....	5.1	5.0	4.7
Nebraska.....	6.1	5.8	5.9
New York.....	8.1	7.9	8.0
Ohio.....	6.0	5.9	6.0
Oregon.....	6.0	6.0	5.8
Pennsylvania.....	7.7	7.8	7.7
Rhode Island.....	8.2	8.1	7.8
South Carolina.....	6.8	6.8	6.6
South Dakota.....	5.8	5.6	5.6
Tennessee.....	5.3	5.2	5.3
Utah.....	4.8	5.1	4.9
Vermont.....	7.8	7.6	7.5
Virginia.....	7.8	7.7	7.7
Wisconsin.....	7.0	7.2	7.0
Wyoming.....	4.6	4.3	4.7

MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Table 4. 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, 1954-77

[Refers only to events occurring within the United States. For 1960-77 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	Rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age
1977.....	1,095,000	1.00	17.0
1976.....	1,117,000	1.03	17.1
1975.....	1,123,000	1.08	16.9
1974.....	1,099,000	1.12	16.3
1973.....	1,079,000	1.17	15.8
1972.....	1,021,000	1.20	14.8
1971.....	946,000	1.22	13.6
1970.....	870,000	1.22	12.5
1969.....	840,000	1.31	11.9
1968.....	784,000	1.34	11.1
1967.....	701,000	1.34	9.9
1966.....	669,000	1.34	9.5
1965.....	630,000	1.32	8.9
1964.....	613,000	1.36	8.7
1963.....	562,000	1.31	8.2
1962.....	532,000	1.29	7.9
1961.....	516,000	1.25	7.8
1960.....	463,000	1.18	7.2
1959.....	468,000	1.18	7.5
1958.....	398,000	1.08	6.5
1957.....	379,000	0.99	6.4
1956.....	361,000	0.95	6.3
1955.....	347,000	0.92	6.3
1954.....	341,000	0.90	6.4

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-----	*

MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Table 5. DIVORCES AND ANNULMENTS BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN REPORTED: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1977

[Based on sample data. Data related 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.....	656,339	289,428	162,616	120,519	46,608	15,731	6,925	14,512
Alabama.....	23,830	11,130	5,990	3,910	1,380	710	150	560
Alaska.....	3,579	1,744	829	641	226	81	31	27
California.....	131,360	60,260	30,920	22,940	8,100	1,940	860	6,340
Connecticut.....	12,374	4,962	2,906	2,692	1,108	350	150	206
Georgia.....	30,950	15,440	7,490	5,000	1,730	680	290	320
Hawaii.....	4,602	2,020	1,096	876	380	140	86	4
Idaho ¹	6,014	2,690	1,464	1,168	410	144	90	48
Illinois.....	48,980	21,517	12,005	9,041	3,759	1,362	671	625
Iowa.....	10,890	4,048	2,842	2,284	934	378	154	250
Kansas.....	12,660	5,390	3,345	2,525	980	325	90	5
Kentucky.....	15,630	6,770	4,410	2,580	900	295	195	480
Maryland.....	16,535	7,160	4,555	2,980	1,030	340	130	340
Michigan.....	42,870	17,640	9,490	8,270	3,480	1,330	480	2,180
Missouri.....	25,328	11,687	6,791	4,396	1,590	526	241	97
Montana.....	4,830	2,176	1,182	940	324	92	68	48
Nebraska ¹	6,126	2,550	1,549	1,248	504	190	85	-
New York.....	55,802	24,671	13,037	10,534	4,307	1,532	683	1,038
Ohio.....	57,380	24,520	14,780	10,920	4,660	1,760	620	120
Oregon.....	16,385	7,590	3,935	3,175	1,100	270	100	215
Pennsylvania.....	37,920	14,840	9,640	7,690	3,000	1,160	630	960
Rhode Island.....	3,420	1,218	880	681	325	146	84	86
South Carolina.....	10,718	4,767	2,996	1,928	716	193	108	10
South Dakota.....	2,436	915	645	542	212	73	42	7
Tennessee.....	27,510	13,230	7,550	4,330	1,590	430	220	160
Utah.....	6,924	2,736	1,656	1,284	630	210	152	256
Vermont.....	2,132	837	485	451	213	85	42	19
Virginia.....	21,464	9,629	5,733	3,906	1,460	455	207	74
Wisconsin.....	14,610	5,865	3,655	3,035	1,330	480	230	15
Wyoming.....	3,080	1,426	760	552	230	54	36	22

¹Data are for number of children affected by decree.

This report represents summary tabulations from the final divorce statistics for 1977. More detailed tabulations for 1977 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.

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

Figures in tables 1 and 2 are based on totals of divorce decrees tabulated and reported by States and counties. Figures in tables 3 and 5 are based on data tabulated from State-coded data tapes and from probability samples of divorce records selected and coded in the National Center for Health Statistics from copies of the records sent in by States participating in the divorce-registration area. For 1971-77, 29 States participated.

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 1961-77 were prepared by multiplying the national divorce 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 1971-77.

Divorce Samples

Sample data used to estimate the 1977 frequencies in table 5 and the frequencies used to compute median duration of marriage for 1975-77 in table 3 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 divorce-registration area. 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 Cooperative Health Statistics System, 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. Alaska and South Dakota were the only States coded in NCHS with a 100-percent sampling rate.

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 1977 data and only for the divorce-registration area for 1975 and 1976 data.

SAMPLING ERROR OF ESTIMATED FREQUENCY EXPRESSED AS PERCENTAGE OF AREA TOTAL: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA, 1975-77 AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1977

[Figures for Alaska, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, and Virginia have no sampling errors in 1977 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:				
1977 (29 States)	232	698	1,008	1,164
1976 (29 States)	207	624	900	1,040
1975 (29 States)	206	620	894	1,033
Registration States, 1977:				
Alabama	46	139	200	231
Alaska .....	...	...	...	...
California	158	476	686	793
Connecticut	11	33	48	55
Georgia	53	158	229	264
Hawaii	7	20	29	34
Idaho	8	23	34	39
Illinois .....	...	...	...	...
Iowa	10	31	45	52
Kansas	22	67	97	112
Kentucky	25	75	108	125
Maryland	26	77	112	129
Michigan	62	187	270	311
Missouri .....	...	...	...	...
Montana	7	20	29	34
Nebraska .....	...	...	...	...
New York .....	...	...	...	...
Ohio	104	313	452	522
Oregon	25	77	111	128
Pennsylvania	58	175	253	292
Rhode Island .....	...	...	...	...
South Carolina .....	...	...	...	...
South Dakota .....	...	...	...	...
Tennessee	49	149	215	248
Utah	8	25	36	42
Vermont .....	...	...	...	...
Virginia .....	...	...	...	...
Wisconsin	24	73	105	121
Wyoming	5	17	24	28