

Advance Report of Final Marriage Statistics, 1981

Marriages and marriage rates

Marriages increased for the sixth consecutive year, rising 1 percent from 2,390,252 in 1980 to 2,422,145 in 1981. Because this increase between 1980 and 1981 was accompanied by a comparable increase in the population, the marriage rate remained at 10.6 marriages per 1,000 population in 1981 (table 1 and figure 1). According to provisional data for 1982, marriages increased another 3 percent, setting a new national record of 2,495,000. The provisional marriage rate rose to 10.8 per 1,000 population. Except for 1972 and 1973, the marriage rate has not been as high since 1950.

The number of marriages for the individual States, divisions, and regions are shown in table 2. Between 1980 and 1981, the number of marriages increased in 35 States and the District of Columbia. Decreases were reported for 15 States, including seven States in the North Central Region. This was the only region for which fewer marriages were reported in 1981 than in 1980.

During the 1970's the annual number of marriages in the United States peaked in 1973, dropped 6 percent by 1975, then rebounded, setting new records every year after 1978. Most, but not all, States and regions followed a similar pattern of decline and recovery so that by 1981 there were more marriages nationally than in 1971. The number of marriages in 1981 exceeded that in 1971 by 11 percent nationally, by 1 percent in the North Central Region, by 16 percent in the South Region, and by 25 percent in the West Region. In contrast, the number of marriages in the Northeast Region was 3 percent lower in 1981 than in 1971.

There was wide variation in the marriage rate among regions and States in 1981. Rates ranged from 8.3 in the Northeast Region to 12.3 in the West Region. Among States, marriage rates varied from 7.6 per 1,000 population in Delaware to 119.9 in Nevada. Four States had relatively low rates, below 8.0 per 1,000 population (Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island) while eight States had relatively high marriage rates of 13.0 per 1,000 population or above (Alaska, Idaho,

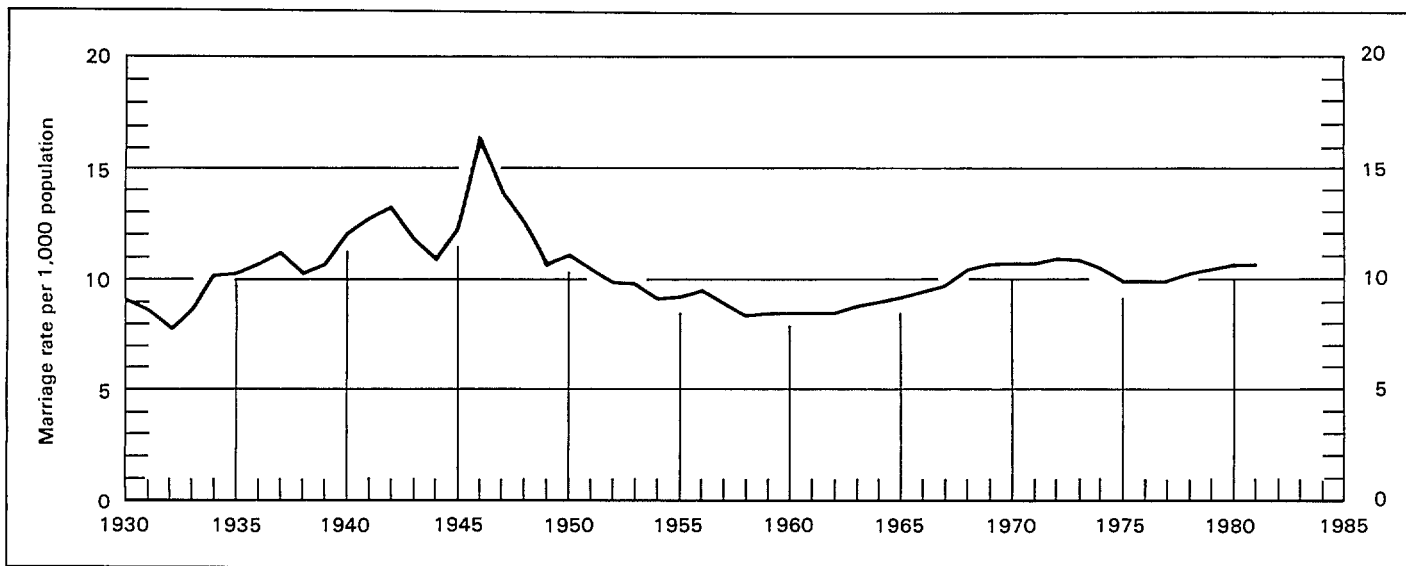


Figure 1. Marriage rates: United States, 1930-81

Nevada, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming). Although there was no change between 1980 and 1981 in the national marriage rate, there were increases in the rates for 25 States and the District of Columbia, decreases for 18 States, and no change for 7.

Nationally, the marriage rate was the same in 1981 as it was in 1971 (10.6), but the marriage rates for three of the four geographic regions were lower. The rate for the Northeast Region was 1 percent lower, and the rates for the North Central and South Regions were both 2 percent lower. Only the rate for the West Region was higher in 1981 than in 1971. Marriage rates were higher in 1981 than in 1971 in 23 States, lower in 23 States and the District of Columbia, and the same in 4 States.

The marriage rate per 1,000 unmarried women 15 years of age and over was 61.7 in 1981, up slightly from 61.4 in 1980. This was the first increase since 1978 (table 3). Since 1975 this rate has been lower than in any year since 1940, the first year data were available nationally.

A still more refined rate is based on unmarried women 15–44 years of age, the age range of 94 percent of the women who were married in 1981. This rate was 103.1 per 1,000 unmarried women 15–44 years of age in 1981, up slightly from 102.6 in 1980. This indicates that just over one-tenth of unmarried women in the most eligible ages married in both years. This rate fell every year from 1972 to 1980, dropping 27 percent over this period before the upturn in 1981. The rate ranged between 122.4 and 199.0 between 1940 to 1974. Since 1974 the rate has been at a very low level.

The crude marriage rate can be at the relatively high level of 10.6 per 1,000 population in 1981 while the rate for unmarried women 15–44 years of age is at the low level of 103.1 because a relatively large proportion of the population of the country is marriageable: Unmarried women 15–44 years of age comprised 10 percent of the population in 1981. In contrast, in 1960 when the crude rate was low (8.5 per 1,000 population) and the rate per 1,000 unmarried women 15–44 was high (148.0), only 6 percent of the population was in this group, making the population base relatively small and the rate relatively high.

Characteristics of marriages

The following discussion about the characteristics of marriages and of brides and grooms is based on information from States that participate in the marriage-registration area (MRA). (See Technical notes.) The MRA included 41 States and the District of Columbia in 1971–78, and 42 States and the District of Columbia in 1979–81. In 1981, 80 percent of all marriages in the United States were performed in the registration area. MRA data are the most complete set of detailed information available from vital statistics, but they differ somewhat from national data. For example, the marriage rate for the MRA was 9.8, approximately 8 percent lower than the same rate for the entire United States (10.6).

The MRA data in table 4 indicate that the increase in marriages in 1981 was the net effect of an increase in remarriages that was sufficiently large to offset a decrease in first marriages. Furthermore, while the total number of first marriages declined, the decrease was limited to brides and grooms under 25 years of age, brides 65 and over, and grooms 45 and over. Rates of first marriage for brides declined for age groups under 25 and increased for age groups 25 through 64. Rates of first marriage for grooms increased only for the age group 45–64. Remarriage rates for both sexes increased in 1981 because of higher rates of remarriage after divorce rather than after widowhood.

Marriage rates specific for age and previous marital status of men and women are shown in table 4. For women there were slight increases in age groups 25–64. For men, age-specific rates increased only for ages 45–64 years. The relationship of the rates for men and women is different for the specific marital status groups. Under 25 years of age, men's age-specific rates of first marriage are lower than women's while at 25 years and over men's rates are higher than women's. For all age groups, men's rates of remarriage are higher than women's for both the previously widowed and the previously divorced categories.

The trend toward later age at marriage that has occurred in recent years is demonstrated by the median age at marriage shown in table 5. The median age at first marriage in 1981 was 22.0 years for brides and 23.9 years for grooms. Both measures had been 1.5 years younger in 1972. The median age at remarriage after divorce for brides was 31.2 and for grooms, 34.4. The median age of previously widowed brides was 53.6 years of age. While this measure fluctuates more than medians for single and divorced women, the trend has been generally upward from about 50 years of age in the mid 1960's. The median age at marriage of previously widowed grooms was 61.0 years in 1981, up from about 58 years of age in the 1960's.

Men are generally older at marriage than women. The difference between median ages at first marriage of men and women in 1981 was 1.9 years, at remarriage after divorce, 3.2 years, and at remarriage after being widowed, 7.4 years.

The distribution of marriages according to the joint marital history of the bride and groom is shown in table 6. Many marriages are remarriages of either or both the bride and groom. In 1981, 23 percent of marriages were remarriages of both spouses. Another 10 percent were remarriages of brides to never-married grooms, and 12 percent were remarriages of grooms to never-married brides. Thus, about 45 percent of marriages were remarriages of one or both partners and only 55 percent were primary marriages, or first marriages of both. These proportions have shifted during the last decade. In 1971, 32 percent of all marriages were remarriages and 68 percent were primary marriages.

Based on information from 25 reporting States, men remarry sooner than women after the end of a previous marriage, and both sexes remarry sooner after divorce than after widowhood. In 1981 the median interval to remarriage after divorce was 1.7 years for men, 1.9 years for women. The median interval to remarriage after widowhood was 2.0 years for men and 4.2 years for women.

For many characteristics 1981 marriages were typical of those in earlier years. For example, 86 percent of brides and grooms married in their State of residence. Most marriages (71 percent) were religious ceremonies. For brides married for the first time, 77 percent were married in a religious setting; for remarried brides the proportion was lower (60 percent). Saturday was the most frequently chosen day for a wedding (55 percent) with Friday (18 percent) next in order.

Marriages are seasonal with the fewest in January and the most in June. In 1981, 5 percent of the marriages took place in January and 12 percent in June. Remarriages have less seasonal variation than first marriages. The monthly variation in first marriages ranged from 5 percent in January to 13 percent in June; remarriages ranged from 6 percent in January to 10 percent in June.

Table 1. Marriages and marriage rates: United States, 1940, 1950, and 1958-81

[Data refer only to events occurring within the United States. Alaska included beginning 1959 and Hawaii beginning 1960. Beginning with 1978, data include nonlicensed marriages registered in California; see Technical notes. Rates per 1,000 population enumerated as of April 1 for census years and estimated as of July 1 for all other years]

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Rate</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Rate</i>
1981	2,422,145	10.6	1968	2,069,000	10.4
1980	2,390,252	10.6	1967	1,927,000	9.7
1979	2,331,337	10.4	1966	1,857,000	9.5
1978	2,282,272	10.3	1965	1,800,000	9.3
1977	2,178,367	9.9	1964	1,725,000	9.0
1976	2,154,807	9.9	1963	1,654,000	8.8
1975	2,152,662	10.0	1962	1,577,000	8.5
1974	2,229,667	10.5	1961	1,548,000	8.5
1973	2,284,108	10.8	1960	1,523,000	8.5
1972	2,282,154	10.9	1959	1,494,000	8.5
1971	2,190,481	10.6	1958	1,451,000	8.4
1970	2,158,802	10.6	1950	1,667,231	11.1
1969	2,145,000	10.6	1940	1,595,879	12.1

Table 2. Marriages and marriage rates: United States, each region, division, and State, 1971, 1980, and 1981

[By place of occurrence. Data are counts of marriages performed, except as noted. Rates per 1,000 population estimated as of July 1 for 1971 and 1981 and enumerated as of April 1 for 1980]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1981	1980	1971	1981	1980	1971
United States	2,422,145	2,390,252	2,190,481	10.6	10.6	10.6
Regions:						
Northeast	407,485	400,313	417,971	8.3	8.1	8.4
North Central	565,246	569,237	559,217	9.6	9.7	9.8
South	906,110	880,185	779,553	11.8	11.7	12.1
West	543,304	540,517	433,740	12.3	12.5	12.1
Northeast:						
New England	108,603	106,328	104,913	8.7	8.6	8.7
Middle Atlantic	298,882	293,985	313,058	8.1	8.0	8.3
North Central:						
East North Central	390,965	395,517	396,535	9.4	9.5	9.8
West North Central	174,281	173,720	162,682	10.1	10.1	9.9
South:						
South Atlantic	421,595	413,113	377,111	11.2	11.2	11.9
East South Central	1,168,992	1,168,828	1,162,164	11.5	11.5	12.4
West South Central	315,523	298,244	240,278	12.9	12.6	12.1
West:						
Mountain	235,122	241,704	193,416	20.1	21.3	22.3
Pacific	308,182	298,813	240,324	9.5	9.4	8.9
New England:						
Maine	12,279	12,040	11,193	10.9	10.7	11.0
New Hampshire	9,987	9,251	9,771	10.7	10.0	12.8
Vermont	5,229	5,226	5,000	10.2	10.2	11.0
Massachusetts	47,802	46,273	47,535	8.3	8.1	8.3
Rhode Island	7,559	7,490	7,589	7.9	7.9	7.9
Connecticut	25,747	26,048	23,825	8.2	8.4	7.8
Middle Atlantic:						
New York	148,228	144,518	161,864	8.4	8.2	8.8
New Jersey	58,010	55,794	56,531	7.8	7.6	7.8
Pennsylvania	92,644	93,673	94,663	7.8	7.9	8.0
East North Central:						
Ohio	99,959	99,832	95,641	9.3	9.2	8.9
Indiana	55,566	57,853	58,076	10.1	10.5	11.1
Illinois	109,074	109,823	115,826	9.5	9.6	10.3
Michigan	85,252	86,898	92,134	9.3	9.4	10.3
Wisconsin	41,114	41,111	34,858	8.7	8.7	7.8
West North Central:						
Minnesota	37,638	37,641	31,196	9.2	9.2	8.1
Iowa	27,153	27,474	25,819	9.3	9.4	9.1
Missouri	54,124	54,625	51,048	11.0	11.1	10.8
North Dakota	6,204	6,094	5,648	9.4	9.3	9.0
South Dakota	8,662	8,800	11,363	12.6	12.7	16.9
Nebraska	14,363	14,239	15,080	9.1	9.1	10.0
Kansas	26,137	24,847	22,528	11.0	10.5	10.0
South Atlantic:						
Delaware	4,545	4,437	4,481	7.6	7.5	7.9
Maryland	47,128	46,278	50,824	11.1	11.0	12.6
District of Columbia	5,318	5,182	6,688	8.4	8.1	8.9
Virginia	61,410	60,210	52,158	11.3	11.3	11.0
West Virginia	16,721	17,391	16,987	8.6	8.9	9.6
North Carolina	48,109	46,718	48,971	8.1	7.9	9.4
South Carolina	54,420	53,915	58,034	17.2	17.3	21.8
Georgia	70,950	70,638	63,860	12.7	12.9	13.6
Florida	112,994	108,344	75,108	11.1	11.1	10.5
East South Central:						
Kentucky	132,217	132,727	35,984	18.8	18.9	10.9
Tennessee	60,063	59,175	50,307	13.0	12.9	12.5
Alabama	48,710	49,018	48,276	12.4	12.6	13.8
Mississippi	28,002	27,908	27,597	11.0	11.1	12.2

See footnotes and note at end of table.

Table 2. Marriages and marriage rates: United States, each region, division, and State, 1971, 1980, and 1981—Con.

[By place of occurrence. Data are counts of marriages performed, except as noted. Rates per 1,000 population estimated as of July 1 for 1971 and 1981 and enumerated as of April 1 for 1980]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1981	1980	1971	1981	1980	1971
West South Central:						
Arkansas	27,673	26,513	24,065	12.1	11.6	12.2
Louisiana	44,929	43,460	36,648	10.5	10.3	9.9
Oklahoma	48,159	46,509	39,333	15.5	15.4	15.0
Texas	194,762	181,762	140,232	13.2	12.8	12.2
Mountain:						
Montana	8,209	8,336	7,128	10.3	10.6	10.0
Idaho	14,173	13,428	11,356	14.8	14.2	15.4
Wyoming	7,057	6,868	4,772	14.4	14.6	14.0
Colorado	37,210	34,917	25,839	12.5	12.1	11.2
New Mexico	² 17,218	16,641	² 14,008	² 12.9	12.8	² 13.3
Arizona	31,906	30,223	20,865	11.4	11.1	11.0
Utah	17,914	16,958	12,037	11.8	11.6	10.9
Nevada	101,435	114,333	² 97,411	119.9	142.8	² 187.3
Pacific:						
Washington	50,025	47,728	40,988	11.9	11.6	11.9
Oregon	22,904	23,004	18,100	8.6	8.7	8.4
California	217,304	210,864	168,049	9.0	8.9	8.3
Alaska	5,731	5,361	3,453	13.8	13.3	10.9
Hawaii	12,218	11,856	9,734	12.5	12.3	12.2

¹Data are incomplete.

²Data include marriage licenses issued for some counties.

NOTE: Rates for 1971 are revised; see Technical notes.

Table 3. Marriage rates for unmarried women: United States, 1940, 1950, and 1958-81

[Data refer only to events occurring within the United States. Alaska included beginning 1959 and Hawaii beginning 1960. Beginning with 1978, data include nonlicensed marriages registered in California; see Technical notes. Rates per 1,000 population enumerated as of April 1 for census years and estimated as of July 1 for all other years]

Year	Rate per 1,000—		Year	Rate per 1,000—	
	Unmarried women 15 years and over	Unmarried women 15-44 years		Unmarried women 15 years and over	Unmarried women 15-44 years
1981	61.7	103.1	1968	79.1	147.2
1980	61.4	102.6	1967	76.4	145.2
1979	63.6	107.9	1966	75.6	145.1
1978	64.1	109.1	1965	75.0	144.3
1977	63.6	109.8	1964	74.6	146.2
1976	65.2	113.4	1963	73.4	143.3
1975	66.9	118.5	1962	71.2	138.4
1974	72.0	128.4	1961	72.2	145.4
1973	76.0	137.3	1960	73.5	148.0
1972	77.9	141.3	1959	73.6	149.8
1971	76.2	138.9	1958	72.0	146.3
1970	76.5	140.2	1950	90.2	166.4
1969	80.0	149.1	1940	82.8	127.4

Table 4. Marriages and marriage rates by age and previous marital status of women and men: Marriage-registration area, 1980 and 1981

[Based on sample data. For sampling errors of estimates and a description of the marriage-registration area, see Technical notes. Marriages of persons under 15 years of age are included in the youngest age groups; rates are based on populations that exclude persons under 15 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. Rates per 1,000 population in specified group enumerated as of April 1 for 1980 and estimated as of July 1 for 1981]

Age and previous marital status	Women				Men			
	Number ¹		Rate ²		Number ¹		Rate ²	
	1981	1980	1981	1980	1981	1980	1981	1980
All marriages								
Total	1,886,396	1,868,595	54.3	54.2	1,886,396	1,868,595	66.8	66.8
15-17 years	94,754	103,993	19.1	20.2	15,249	16,297	2.9	3.0
18-19 years	267,846	290,959	83.8	90.9	129,648	141,948	36.9	39.2
20-24 years	688,527	693,126	121.7	130.8	645,359	667,511	96.0	100.4
25-44 years	722,311	668,643	99.9	96.5	918,770	870,889	118.3	121.2
25-29 years	372,126	349,313	129.2	126.3	457,565	445,166	129.4	131.2
30-34 years	193,458	174,144	98.2	95.0	250,149	229,926	119.8	122.8
35-44 years	156,727	145,186	65.9	62.3	211,056	195,797	98.7	102.0
45-64 years	94,545	93,443	17.8	17.3	145,049	138,664	51.4	49.1
65 years and over	18,413	18,431	2.2	2.2	32,321	33,286	14.8	15.2
First marriages								
Total	1,218,502	1,221,460	64.9	66.0	1,189,287	1,196,075	53.8	54.7
15-17 years	91,444	100,150	18.7	19.8	14,793	15,943	2.9	2.9
18-19 years	251,267	271,338	80.7	87.3	125,093	136,204	36.2	38.4
20-24 years	576,060	577,492	110.0	119.8	579,777	598,431	89.6	94.5
25-44 years	291,383	264,246	79.3	74.9	455,194	430,820	83.7	87.9
25-29 years	212,029	195,374	102.6	101.6	320,105	307,018	106.5	109.9
30-34 years	57,528	48,855	62.7	56.3	97,929	89,575	70.8	75.5
35-44 years	21,826	20,017	31.6	27.1	37,160	34,227	35.5	37.2
45-64 years	7,558	7,411	7.9	7.0	12,990	13,170	12.5	11.6
65 years and over	790	823	0.9	0.9	1,440	1,507	2.8	2.9
Remarriages								
Total	616,385	591,145	39.9	38.3	647,014	618,322	112.5	108.3
15-19 years	8,930	9,818	280.0	231.0	1,158	1,410	323.0	219.2
20-24 years	89,638	90,500						
25-44 years	415,518	388,948						
25-29 years	150,566	144,295	119.7	117.3	441,852	417,844	198.1	190.6
30-34 years	132,296	121,706	128.3	129.0	124,110	124,272	257.5	225.2
35-44 years	132,656	122,947	79.8	78.5	135,275	135,275	216.3	203.9
45-64 years	85,103	84,619	19.9	19.7	170,655	158,297	159.8	162.0
65 years and over	17,196	17,260	2.3	2.3	129,696	123,419	74.2	74.4
Previously widowed ³	56,787	58,612	6.5	6.7	30,252	31,280	18.5	19.0
15-24 years	1,895	1,744	48.4	51.0	478	377	116.7	106.7
25-44 years	15,722	16,235						
45-64 years	26,793	27,960						
65 years and over	12,377	12,673	2.0	2.1	23,826	24,929	53.9	59.2
Previously divorced ³	474,515	447,287	96.3	91.3	19,859	20,992	16.9	17.8
15-19 years	7,236	7,805	282.2	236.4	907	1,007	319.7	217.6
20-24 years	75,154	74,745						
25-44 years	342,939	317,084						
45-64 years	46,708	45,148	129.1	122.8	37,140	36,761	197.9	188.8
65 years and over	2,478	2,505	30.2	30.3	88,519	82,108	82.6	79.1
Not stated if widowed or divorced	85,083	85,246	...	...	6,520	6,539	23.0	22.8
Not stated if previously married								
Total	51,509	55,990	...	...	88,211	88,279	...	...

¹Figures for first marriages and remarriages exclude data for Iowa; these data are included in "Not stated if previously married."

²All rates exclude data for Iowa.

³Data exclude remarriages in Michigan, Ohio, and South Carolina. These data are included in "Not stated if widowed or divorced."

Table 5. Median age of bride and groom by previous marital status: Marriage-registration area, 1963-81

[Based on sample data. Figures by previous marital status exclude data for Iowa beginning with 1977. Figures for previously divorced and previously widowed exclude data for Michigan and Ohio for all years, for South Carolina beginning with 1972, and for the District of Columbia for 1970. For a description of the marriage-registration area, see Technical notes]

Year	Median age of bride					Median age of groom				
	Total	First marriage	Remarriage			Total	First marriage	Remarriage		
			Total	Previously divorced	Previously widowed			Total	Previously divorced	Previously widowed
1981	24.1	22.0	32.1	31.2	53.6	26.3	23.9	35.3	34.4	61.0
1980	23.7	21.8	32.0	31.0	53.6	25.9	23.6	35.2	34.0	61.2
1979	23.4	21.6	31.9	30.8	55.2	25.8	23.4	35.3	33.9	61.7
1978	23.2	21.4	31.5	30.5	52.6	25.5	23.2	35.1	33.8	59.7
1977	22.9	21.1	31.4	30.2	53.1	25.2	23.0	34.9	33.6	60.1
1976	22.7	21.0	31.7	30.1	53.0	25.0	22.9	35.1	33.7	60.0
1975	22.4	20.8	32.0	30.2	52.4	24.7	22.7	35.5	33.6	59.4
1974	22.0	20.6	32.1	30.0	51.9	24.2	22.5	35.7	33.6	59.2
1973	21.9	20.6	32.3	30.2	52.1	24.1	22.5	36.3	33.9	59.3
1972	21.7	20.5	32.8	30.3	51.4	23.8	22.4	36.5	34.0	59.1
1971	21.7	20.5	32.9	30.2	51.8	23.7	22.5	36.9	34.1	59.1
1970	21.7	20.6	33.3	30.1	51.2	23.6	22.5	37.5	34.5	58.7
1969	21.6	20.6	33.8	30.4	51.3	23.5	22.4	38.2	34.7	59.0
1968	21.5	20.6	33.8	30.7	50.6	23.6	22.4	38.3	35.1	57.9
1967	21.4	20.5	35.0	31.3	50.0	23.8	22.6	39.1	35.5	57.7
1966	21.5	20.3	35.2	31.4	50.2	23.8	22.6	39.2	35.8	57.9
1965	21.4	20.4	35.5	31.7	50.1	23.6	22.5	39.6	36.0	57.8
1964	21.4	20.4	35.6	31.7	50.3	23.6	22.4	39.7	36.4	58.0
1963	21.3	20.3	35.6	31.8	49.7	23.7	22.5	39.8	36.3	58.0

Table 6. Percent distribution of marriages by marriage order of both bride and groom: Marriage-registration area, 1970-81

[Based on sample data. Beginning in 1977, figures exclude data for Iowa. Computed from totals excluding marriage order not stated. For a description of the marriage-registration area, see Technical notes]

Year	Marriage order of both bride and groom				
	All marriages	First marriage of bride and groom	First marriage of bride, remarriage of groom	Remarriage of bride, first marriage of groom	Remarriage of bride and groom
Percent					
1981	100.0	54.7	11.8	10.1	23.4
1980	100.0	56.2	11.3	9.8	22.7
1979	100.0	56.4	11.2	9.5	22.9
1978	100.0	57.1	11.1	9.3	22.5
1977	100.0	57.5	10.8	9.0	22.6
1976	100.0	58.5	10.7	8.8	22.0
1975	100.0	60.1	9.9	8.6	21.3
1974	100.0	62.9	9.2	8.1	19.8
1973	100.0	64.6	8.7	7.9	18.9
1972	100.0	66.7	8.2	7.4	17.6
1971	100.0	67.7	8.0	7.3	17.0
1970	100.0	68.6	7.6	7.3	16.5

Technical notes

Place and time of occurrence

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

Sources of data

Figures in tables 1–3 are based on totals reported by States and counties. Figures in tables 4–6 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 (NCHS) from copies of the records sent in by States participating in the marriage-registration area (MRA). In 1981 the MRA consisted of the District of Columbia and all except eight States—Arizona, Arkansas, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington. In 1971 it consisted of the District of Columbia and all States except nine; Colorado joined in 1979. Marriages performed in the MRA included 81 percent of the marriages registered in the United States in 1971 and 80 percent in 1981.

Nonlicensed (confidential) marriages for California

Section 4213 of the California Civil Code allows unmarried couples who have been living together to be married confidentially without obtaining a marriage license or health certificate. In March 1972 this section was amended to require county clerks to keep sealed records of these marriages and periodically to report the total number to the California State Department of Health Services. Since reporting began, nonlicensed marriages have increased rapidly, from 2,857 in 1973 to 54,075 in 1981. NCHS has not included the nonlicensed California marriages in totals or rates for years prior to 1978. However, beginning with final statistics for 1978, nonlicensed marriages, which totaled 37,462 in that year, are included in the national and geographic totals and rates.

Marriage sample

Twelve States—Florida, Illinois, Maine, Missouri, Montana, 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 Vital Statistics Cooperative Program, and 100 percent of these records were used by NCHS. For all other States in the MRA, records were sampled at different rates that were designed to give a sample of at least 2,500 for each State. All records were included in the sample for Alaska, Delaware, and the District of Columbia, where totals of less than 5,000 mar-

Table 1. Approximate sampling errors of estimated numbers of marriages shown in table 4: Marriage-registration area, 1980 and 1981

<i>Percent of total MRA marriages in subclass</i>	<i>1981 sampling error</i>	<i>1980 sampling error</i>
1 or 99	417	416
2 or 98	586	586
3 or 97	714	714
4 or 96	821	820
5 or 95	913	912
7 or 93	1,069	1,068
10 or 90	1,256	1,256
15 or 85	1,495	1,495
20 or 80	1,675	1,674
25 or 75	1,814	1,812
50	2,094	2,093

HOW TO USE THE SAMPLING ERROR TABLE: The total numbers of MRA marriages in 1980 and 1981 (excluding nonlicensed California marriages) were 1,868,595 and 1,886,396, respectively. For any estimate of marriages shown in table 4, determine its percent of the total MRA marriages for the corresponding year. Then look in the table of sampling errors for the row containing the computed percent to determine the sampling error for the estimated number of marriages for that year. For example, in 1980 there were an estimated 591,145 remarriages of women, or 31.6 percent of all 1980 MRA marriages. Because 31.6 is between 25 and 50 percent, the sampling error is between 1,812 and 2,093, or, by interpolation, about 1,886 marriages. The chances are about 68 out of 100 that the actual number of 1980 remarriages is between 589,259 and 593,031 ($591,145 \pm 1,886$).

riages had been anticipated, and for New York City. One-half of all records were included from 3 States, one-fifth from 6 States, one-tenth from 11 States, and one-twentieth from 8 States. The total sample size, including records supplied through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program, was 728,044 marriages. Sampling errors shown in table I are for frequencies that equal a specified percent of the total MRA marriages.

Nonlicensed marriages registered in California are not available for inclusion in the MRA marriage sample. The 5-percent sample of California marriages for 1981 was drawn only from licensed marriages. The corresponding weights for sample records were based on these totals. Because no information is available on the characteristics of persons obtaining nonlicensed marriages, no accurate estimate is available for the bias introduced in sample estimates by the omission of these marriages.

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.

Population denominators

Marriage rates for 1981 are based on the population estimated as of July 1, 1981. Marriage rates for 1980 are based on the population enumerated in the 1980 census. Rates for 1971-79 have been revised to be consistent with the 1980 rates based

on the 1980 census and may differ from rates shown in the Advance Reports for 1979 and earlier years. Rates for 1971-79 have been recomputed for all categories shown for which revised populations are available. Rates by marital status shown in table 3 were not recomputed because revised population estimates were not available for the intercensal years.

Symbols

- - - Data not available
 - . . . Category not applicable
 - Quantity zero
 - 0.0 Quantity more than 0 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
-

This report represents summary tabulations from the final marriage statistics for 1981. More detailed tabulations for 1981 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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