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Advance Report of Final Divorce Statistics, 1985

Divorces and divorce rates

In 1985 1,190,000 couples divorced in the United States, leaving the ranks of the 109 million currently married men and women to join the 5.4 million divorced men and 7.8 million divorced women. The 1985 divorce total was the second highest in history, exceeded only by the total for 1981 (table 1). For 19 years the number of divorces had increased each year, from 113,000 in 1962 to 1,213,000 in 1981. Since 1981, the total has fluctuated, dropping in 1982 and 1983, rising in 1984 and 1985, and, according to provisional reports, dropping again in 1986.

The 1985 divorce rate was 5.0 per 1,000 total population, unchanged from the previous year. However, there was a rise in the divorce rate per 1,000 married women 15 years of age and over, the population that is actually at risk of divorce. This rate rose for the second consecutive year, from 21.3 per 1,000 married women in 1983 to 21.5 in 1984 and to 21.7 in 1985. This rate had reached a record high of 22.8 in 1979, then dropped until 1983, and has since rebounded (figure 1). The rate of 21.7 per 1,000 married women means that more than 2 percent of American wives divorced in 1985.

There are sharp differences in divorce rates among regions. Historically, the divorce rates for the West and the South have been considerably higher than for the Midwest, and all three have been higher than the rate for the Northeast. This basic pattern continued in 1985. The rate for the West was 5.8 per 1,000 total population, 4 percent higher than the rate for the South (5.6), 29 percent higher than the rate for the Midwest (4.5), and 53 percent higher than the rate for the Northeast (3.8) (table 2). However, the rates have been converging. Between 1984 and 1985 the rate for the West dropped, and the rates for the Northeast, Midwest, and South rose. In the decade between 1975 and 1985, the rate for the West dropped 9 percent (from 6.4 to 5.8), and the rate for the Northeast rose 23 percent (from 3.1 to 3.8).

In 1985 data from 44 States and the District of Columbia were sufficiently reliable and complete to support valid comparisons. Among these areas Texas had the highest number of divorces (100,394), followed by Florida (77,545), New York (67,616), Ohio (53,016), and Illinois (48,917). It is virtually certain that divorces in California exceeded those in Texas, but the records reported for California include an unknown number of legal separations in addition to decrees actually granted. States that reported the fewest divorces were North Dakota (2,295), Vermont (2,355), and South Dakota (2,566). The long-term upward trend in divorce that was observed during the 1970's was also characteristic of most States. Only Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Michigan, and Montana had fewer divorces in 1985 than in 1975.

The divorce rates were highest in Nevada (14.2 per 1,000 population), Oklahoma (8.0), Alaska (7.7), and Wyoming (7.5). The rate for New Mexico was also high, but in addition to decrees granted the data included an unknown number of divorce petitions filed. Divorce rates were lowest in North Dakota and Pennsylvania (3.4 each). Divorce rates rose in 16 States, fell in 12 States and the District of Columbia, and were unchanged in 16 States.

Data for the preceding discussion come from reports of the number of divorces provided annually by the 50 States and the District of Columbia. For the following discussions of children involved in divorce, age at divorce and at marriage, and duration of marriage, detailed information comes from the 31 States in the divorce-registration area (DRA). About 48 percent of the divorces in the United States took place in DRA States in 1985.

Children involved in divorce

Three statistical measures are published annually that document the involvement of American children in divorce—the total number of children, the average number of children per divorce decree, and the rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of

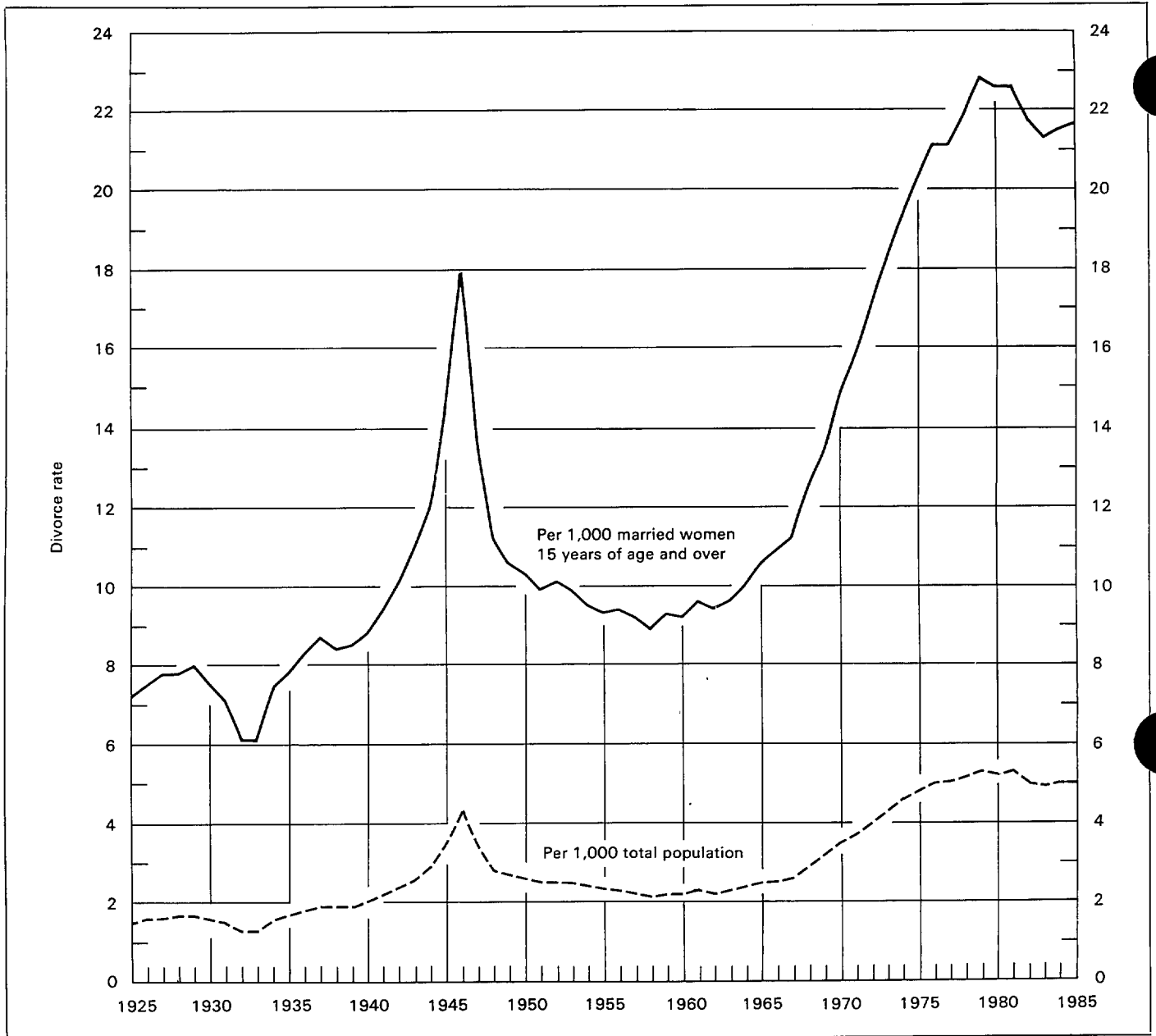


Figure 1. Divorce rates: United States, 1925-85

age (table 3). These measures show that the number of children peaked in 1979 and has since fluctuated, that the average number per decree has been falling irregularly for almost two decades, and that the rate per 1,000 children peaked in 1981, declined in 1982-84, and rose slightly in 1985.

Specifically, more than 1 million children have been involved in divorce annually since 1972 when an estimated 1,021,000 were reported (figure 2). The number reached a record high of 1,181,000 in 1979 and has fluctuated since then. The average number of children per decree was 0.92 in 1985, the same as in 1984. It had generally fallen from 1.36 in 1964 to 0.92 in 1984 and 1985. This decline occurred in part because average family size in the United States was shrinking. The rate per 1,000

children under 18 years of age had more than doubled between 1964 and 1981, rising from 8.7 to 18.7. It subsequently fell to 17.2 in 1984 and then increased slightly to 17.3 in 1985.

Not all divorcing couples have children. In fact, for almost half of all couples (47 percent in 1985) there were no children reported, for 26 percent there was one child, for 20 percent there were two children, and 8 percent had three children or more (table 4).

Age

Rates specific for age have been calculated since 1982 for a uniform group of 28 States. The rates are higher for younger

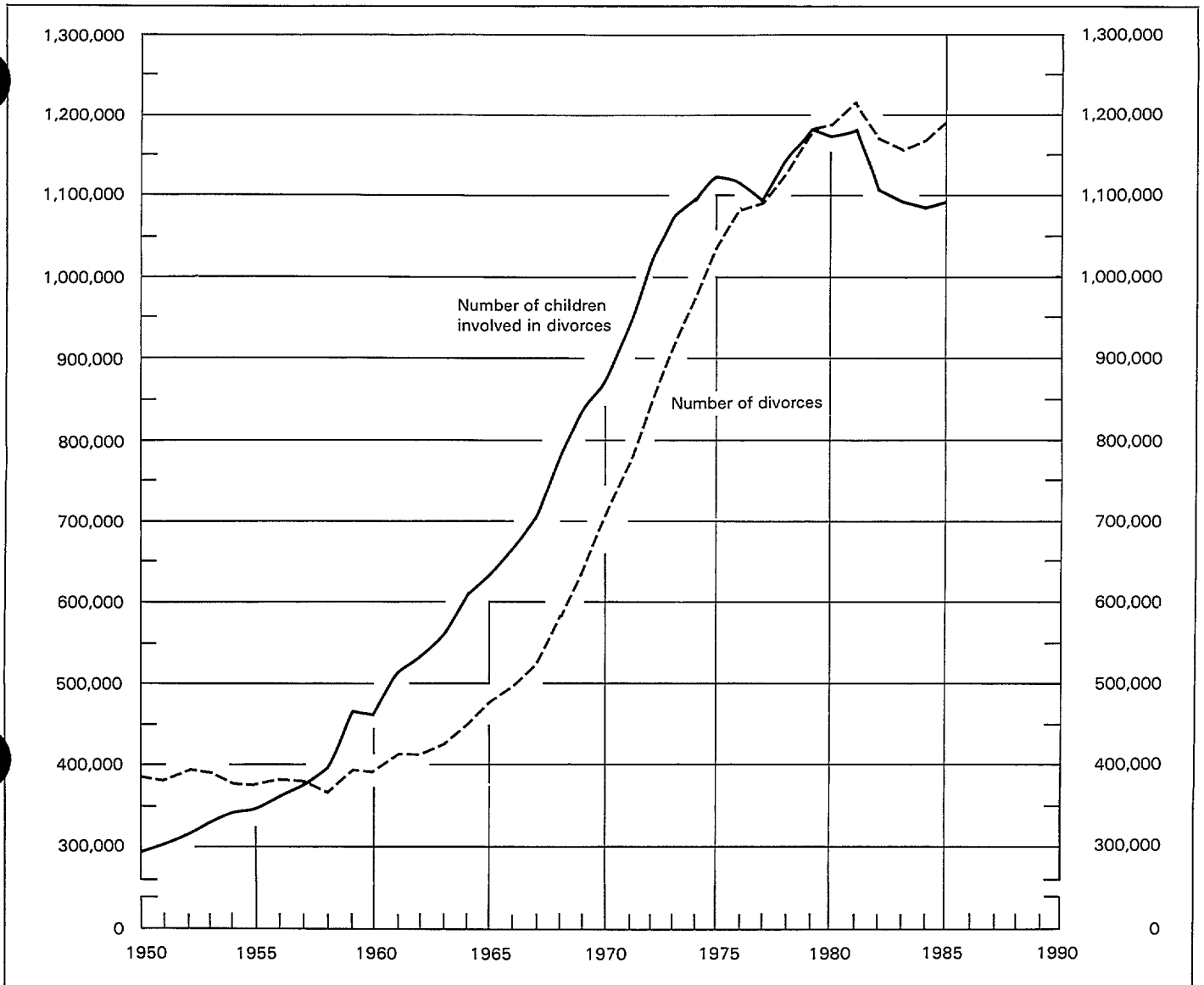


Figure 2. Divorces and children involved: United States, 1950-85

than older people. In 1985 divorce rates for wives were highest for teenagers (48.4 per 1,000 married women), more than twice the rate for wives aged 35-39 years (23.4), and almost 12 times the rate for wives aged 55-59 years (4.2). For men, rates were highest for husbands aged 20-24 years (49.9 per 1,000), more than twice as high as rates for married men aged 40-44 years (23.2), and 12 times as high as rates for married men aged 60-64 years (4.1).

Between 1982 and 1985 most age-specific rates for men and women in age groups 40 years and over rose, as did rates for men aged 20-24 years. There was no consistent trend in rates for other age groups during that time period. In contrast, there had been a very pronounced upward trend in age-specific rates between 1970 and 1980, when most rates rose substantially (table 5).

Age at marriage has been steadily rising in recent years, and the age distribution of divorcing men and women has echoed

the trend. In 1975, 15 percent of divorcing men were age 20-24 years; by 1985 only 10 percent were in that age group. The proportion of divorcing men who were age 25-29 years was 25 percent in 1975 and had dropped to 21 percent by 1985. Concurrently, the proportions for ages 30-44 years were increasing, and the proportions for age groups 45 years and over showed no consistent trend. Wives tend to be a few years younger than their husbands, but the changes in the age distribution of divorcing women were similar to those for men. The mean and median ages of husbands and wives summarize these distributions and showed persistent increases for both men and women after 1978. The mean age of divorcing husbands was 32.0 years in 1978 and rose each year, reaching 34.4 years in 1985. The mean age of divorcing wives rose from 32.1 to 33.7 years between 1978 and 1985 (table 6).

The distribution of age at marriage of husbands divorcing in 1985 (table 7) shows that 14 percent had married as teen-

agers and 41 percent had been 20–24 years of age. Thus the majority had married before age 25. Of the divorcing wives more than two-thirds had married before age 25, with 33 percent marrying as teenagers and 37 percent at 20–24 years of age. Although the mean age at marriage of divorcing men and women increased by 1.1 years between 1975 and 1985, it did not increase as much as the mean age at divorce (1.4 years) because couples divorcing in 1985 had been married longer.

The variation among States in age at marriage and age at divorce is shown in table 8.

Duration of dissolving marriages

The following discussion of duration of marriages concerns marriages that end in divorce. However, it should be kept in mind that the majority of ever-married Americans have not divorced. Data from the 1985 Current Population Survey show that 76 percent of ever-married women have not divorced. For the approximately 2 percent of married Americans who did divorce in 1985, the duration of their marriages ranged from a few months to more than 60 years. The proportion of divorces is greatest at durations of 2 and 3 years, then diminishes. In the divorce-registration area 4 percent had been married less than 1 year, 8 percent had been married 1 year, 9 percent had been married 2 years, and another 9 percent, 3 years. Smaller percentages of the dissolving marriages fell into each longer duration.

The average duration to decree in 1985 was 9.5 years, the same as in 1984 and 0.3 year longer than in 1975 (table 9). Putting this information on duration together with the information on mean ages at marriage and divorce shows that, on the

average, divorcing women in 1975 were 32.3 years of age, had remained married 9.2 years, and had been married at 23.2 years of age in 1966 to husbands who were 2.6 years older than themselves. Divorcing wives in 1985 were 33.7 years of age, had stayed married 9.5 years, and had married at 24.3 years of age in 1976 to husbands who were 2.6 years older than themselves. An analysis of the relative influence of current age, age at marriage, and marital duration on the likelihood of divorce has been done by Thornton and Rodgers (1987).¹

Among States, there are rather wide variations in duration of dissolving marriages, ranging from an average of 7.3 years in Alaska to 11.8 years in Massachusetts. These variations are due in part to differences in the speed with which a divorce can be obtained under the laws of the separate States. As a result, in Alabama 10.3 percent of couples divorced in less than 1 year after marrying. In Maryland, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia, less than 1 percent did so (table 10). Other factors are associated with duration to decree, and these factors vary with the composition of the population of the different States. These other variables, including age at marriage, previous marital histories of the spouses, and number of children in the family, are discussed in an earlier report (NCHS, 1981).²

¹Thornton, A., and W. L. Rodgers. 1987. The influence of individual and historical time on marital dissolution, *Demography* 24(1): 1–22.

²National Center for Health Statistics, Plateris, A. A. 1981. Duration of marriage before divorce, United States. *Vital and Health Statistics*. Series 21, No. 38. DHHS Pub. No. (PHS) 81–1916. Public Health Service. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Symbols

- - - Data not available
 - . . . Category not applicable
 - Quantity zero
 - 0.0 Quantity more than zero 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
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Table 1. Divorces and annulments and rates: United States, 1940-85

[Data refer only to events occurring within the United States. Alaska included beginning 1959 and Hawaii beginning 1960. Rates per 1,000 population enumerated as of April 1 for census years and estimated as of July 1 for all other years]

Year	Divorces and annulments	Rate per 1,000—	
		Total population	Married women 15 years and over
1985	1,190,000	5.0	21.7
1984	1,169,000	5.0	21.5
1983	1,158,000	4.9	21.3
1982	1,170,000	5.0	21.7
1981	1,213,000	5.3	22.6
1980	1,189,000	5.2	22.6
1979	1,181,000	5.3	22.8
1978	1,130,000	5.1	21.9
1977	1,091,000	5.0	21.1
1976	1,083,000	5.0	21.1
1975	1,036,000	4.8	20.3
1974	977,000	4.6	19.3
1973	915,000	4.3	18.2
1972	845,000	4.0	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
1949	397,000	2.7	10.6
1948	408,000	2.8	11.2
1947	483,000	3.4	13.6
1946	610,000	4.3	17.9
1945	485,000	3.5	14.4
1944	400,000	2.9	12.0
1943	359,000	2.6	11.0
1942	321,000	2.4	10.1
1941	293,000	2.2	9.4
1940	264,000	2.0	8.8

Table 2. Divorces and divorce rates: United States, each region, division, and State, 1975, 1984, and 1985

[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 from those based on sample data shown in table 4. Rates per 1,000 population in each area estimated as of July 1]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1985	1984	1975	1985	1984	1975
United States ¹	1,190,000	1,169,000	1,036,000	5.0	5.0	4.8
Region:						
Northeast.....	187,000	179,000	153,000	3.8	3.6	3.1
Midwest.....	267,000	263,000	¹ 261,000	4.5	4.4	¹ 4.5
South ¹	458,000	447,000	374,000	5.6	5.5	5.4
West.....	278,000	280,000	248,000	5.8	6.0	6.4
Northeast:						
New England.....	49,853	45,620	43,182	3.9	3.6	3.5
Middle Atlantic.....	137,064	133,479	110,013	3.7	3.6	3.0
Midwest:						
East North Central ²	192,555	189,253	186,205	4.6	4.5	*
West North Central.....	74,330	74,148	70,089	4.2	4.2	4.2
South:						
South Atlantic.....	210,454	205,944	174,778	5.2	5.2	5.1
East South Central.....	86,156	² 85,072	74,423	5.7	² 5.7	5.4
West South Central ²	160,899	152,319	122,783	*	*	*
West:						
Mountain.....	89,880	86,009	70,721	7.0	6.9	7.2
Pacific.....	188,498	194,360	177,032	5.4	5.7	6.2
New England:						
Maine.....	6,086	5,809	5,543	5.2	5.0	5.2
New Hampshire.....	4,911	4,949	4,241	4.9	5.1	5.1
Vermont.....	2,355	2,334	1,921	4.4	4.4	4.0
Massachusetts.....	21,573	17,123	16,581	3.7	3.0	2.9
Rhode Island.....	3,699	3,642	2,658	3.8	3.8	2.8
Connecticut.....	11,229	11,763	12,238	3.5	3.7	4.0
Middle Atlantic:						
New York.....	67,616	64,634	55,612	3.8	3.6	3.1
New Jersey.....	29,295	28,470	19,446	3.9	3.8	2.6
Pennsylvania.....	40,153	40,375	34,955	3.4	3.4	2.9
East North Central:						
Ohio.....	² 53,016	² 53,433	52,626	² 4.9	² 5.0	4.9
Indiana ³	35,251	32,701	² 28,755	6.4	5.9	*
Illinois.....	48,917	48,910	50,954	4.2	4.2	4.5
Michigan.....	38,775	37,584	40,782	4.3	4.1	4.5
Wisconsin.....	16,596	16,625	13,088	3.5	3.5	2.9
West North Central:						
Minnesota.....	14,795	14,758	13,188	3.5	3.5	3.4
Iowa.....	10,526	10,509	10,304	3.7	3.6	3.6
Missouri.....	24,990	24,826	24,527	5.0	5.0	5.1
North Dakota.....	2,295	2,249	1,713	3.4	3.3	2.7
South Dakota.....	2,566	2,498	2,228	3.6	3.5	3.3
Nebraska.....	6,364	6,403	5,570	4.0	4.0	3.6
Kansas.....	12,794	12,905	12,559	5.2	5.3	5.5
South Atlantic:						
Delaware.....	2,991	2,907	2,761	4.8	4.7	4.7
Maryland.....	16,187	16,134	15,398	3.7	3.7	3.7
District of Columbia.....	2,659	3,057	3,789	4.3	4.9	5.3
Virginia.....	24,131	24,705	19,491	4.2	4.4	3.9
West Virginia.....	9,851	9,629	8,632	5.1	4.9	4.7
North Carolina.....	30,212	29,601	22,107	4.8	4.8	4.0
South Carolina.....	13,455	13,674	9,671	4.0	4.1	3.3
Georgia.....	33,423	30,905	29,483	5.6	5.3	5.8
Florida.....	77,545	75,332	63,446	6.8	6.9	7.4
East South Central:						
Kentucky.....	18,255	² 17,110	14,508	4.9	² 4.6	4.2
Tennessee.....	29,860	29,638	24,611	6.3	6.3	5.8
Alabama.....	25,012	25,413	23,001	6.2	6.4	6.2
Mississippi.....	² 13,029	² 12,911	12,303	² 5.0	² 5.0	5.1

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Divorces and divorce rates: United States, each region, division, and State, 1975, 1984, and 1985—Con.

[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 from those based on sample data shown in table 4. Rates per 1,000 population in each area estimated as of July 1]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1985	1984	1975	1985	1984	1975
West South Central:						
Arkansas ²	16,528	15,337	16,737	7.0	6.5	7.8
Louisiana ²	17,608	13,894	8,720	*	*	*
Oklahoma	26,369	24,130	20,641	8.0	7.3	7.4
Texas	100,394	98,958	76,685	6.1	6.2	6.1
Mountain:						
Montana	4,258	4,355	4,286	5.2	5.3	5.7
Idaho	6,207	6,210	5,203	6.2	6.2	6.3
Wyoming	3,807	3,705	2,835	7.5	7.3	7.5
Colorado	19,193	18,430	15,733	5.9	5.8	6.1
New Mexico	⁴ 13,172	⁴ 11,216	8,413	⁴ 9.1	⁴ 7.9	7.2
Arizona	21,157	20,009	17,577	6.6	6.6	7.7
Utah	8,768	8,262	6,132	5.3	5.0	5.0
Nevada	13,318	13,822	10,542	14.2	15.2	17.0
Pacific:						
Washington	26,346	27,138	25,848	6.0	6.2	7.1
Oregon	15,736	15,631	15,562	5.9	5.8	6.7
California	⁵ 137,524	⁵ 142,972	128,492	⁵ 5.2	⁵ 5.6	6.0
Alaska	4,005	3,850	2,865	7.7	7.7	7.7
Hawaii	4,887	4,769	4,265	4.6	4.6	4.8

¹Figures include estimates; see Technical notes.

²Data are incomplete; see Technical notes.

³Some counties reported divorce petitions filed rather than decrees granted.

⁴Divorce petitions filed.

⁵Data include legal separations.

Table 3. 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, 1950-85

[Data refer to children under 18 years of age and only to events occurring within the United States. Beginning in 1960, estimated from frequencies based on sample data; for 1950-59, estimated from total counts. For estimating method, see Technical notes. Population enumerated as of April 1 for census years and estimated as of July 1 for all other years]

Year	Estimated number of children involved	Average number of children per decree	Rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age	Year	Estimated number of children involved	Average number of children per decree	Rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age
1985.....	1,091,000	0.92	17.3	1967.....	701,000	1.34	9.9
1984.....	1,081,000	0.92	17.2	1966.....	669,000	1.34	9.5
1983.....	1,091,000	0.94	17.4	1965.....	630,000	1.32	8.9
1982.....	1,108,000	0.94	17.6	1964.....	613,000	1.36	8.7
1981.....	1,180,000	0.97	18.7	1963.....	562,000	1.31	8.2
1980.....	1,174,000	0.98	17.3	1962.....	532,000	1.29	7.9
1979.....	1,181,000	1.00	18.4	1961.....	516,000	1.25	7.8
1978.....	1,147,000	1.01	17.7	1960.....	463,000	1.18	7.2
1977.....	1,095,000	1.00	16.7	1959.....	468,000	1.18	7.5
1976.....	1,117,000	1.03	16.9	1958.....	398,000	1.08	6.5
1975.....	1,123,000	1.08	16.7	1957.....	379,000	0.99	6.4
1974.....	1,099,000	1.12	16.2	1956.....	361,000	0.95	6.3
1973.....	1,079,000	1.17	15.7	1955.....	347,000	0.92	6.3
1972.....	1,021,000	1.20	14.7	1954.....	341,000	0.90	6.4
1971.....	946,000	1.22	13.6	1953.....	330,000	0.85	6.4
1970.....	870,000	1.22	12.5	1952.....	318,000	0.81	6.2
1969.....	840,000	1.21	11.9	1951.....	304,000	0.80	6.1
1968.....	784,000	1.34	11.1	1950.....	299,000	0.78	6.3

Table 4. Number of divorces and annulments and percent distribution by number of children under 18 years of age involved: Divorce-registration area and each registration State, 1985

[Based on sample data]

Area	All divorces and annulments Number	Number of children under 18 years of age involved						
		Total	None	1	2	3	4	5 or more
		Percent distribution						
Divorce-registration area	577,713	100.0	46.6	25.7	19.6	6.3	1.4	0.4
Alabama	25,120	100.0	48.8	25.7	18.6	5.5	1.2	0.3
Alaska	4,009	100.0	48.9	24.2	18.9	5.8	1.7	0.6
Connecticut	11,408	100.0	47.6	25.3	20.0	5.7	1.1	0.3
Delaware	2,991	100.0	45.4	27.3	20.5	5.6	0.8	0.4
Georgia	33,430	100.0	51.1	24.8	16.8	6.0	1.1	0.3
Hawaii	4,879	100.0	44.6	26.0	19.3	7.5	1.9	0.7
Idaho ¹	6,214	100.0	45.8	23.1	20.5	7.4	2.1	1.2
Illinois	48,879	100.0	46.8	24.8	19.5	6.5	1.6	0.7
Iowa	10,524	100.0	39.5	25.1	25.0	8.2	1.7	0.5
Kansas	12,830	100.0	45.1	24.8	20.8	6.9	1.9	0.5
Kentucky	18,325	100.0	47.6	27.5	17.9	5.2	1.4	0.4
Maryland	16,150	100.0	49.6	28.7	17.3	3.6	0.5	0.3
Massachusetts	21,700	100.0	43.6	25.0	21.8	7.6	1.7	0.4
Michigan	38,870	100.0	43.3	25.1	21.4	8.0	1.6	0.6
Missouri	24,990	100.0	47.0	26.5	19.2	5.7	1.3	0.4
Montana	4,276	100.0	43.8	24.6	22.4	6.8	1.8	0.7
Nebraska	6,364	100.0	38.1	24.5	24.7	9.5	2.4	0.8
New Hampshire	4,911	100.0	41.3	26.3	23.4	7.0	1.4	0.6
New York	67,616	100.0	52.9	22.6	17.3	5.4	1.4	0.4
Ohio	53,000	100.0	43.3	27.1	20.7	7.2	1.4	0.2
Oregon	15,720	100.0	44.0	27.0	21.9	5.6	1.5	0.0
Pennsylvania	40,180	100.0	44.8	26.8	20.1	6.5	1.5	0.3
Rhode Island	3,698	100.0	41.3	28.4	21.3	6.7	1.5	0.6
South Carolina	13,456	100.0	47.2	27.7	18.6	5.1	1.1	0.3
South Dakota	2,565	100.0	39.5	26.1	23.7	7.6	2.5	0.6
Tennessee	29,960	100.0	51.4	26.5	16.8	4.6	0.6	0.1
Utah	8,754	100.0	38.8	24.6	20.6	9.0	4.1	2.9
Vermont	2,355	100.0	39.3	26.2	24.9	7.1	2.0	0.5
Virginia	24,131	100.0	49.9	27.8	16.9	4.4	0.8	0.2
Wisconsin	16,600	100.0	38.2	26.7	25.1	7.4	2.0	0.6
Wyoming	3,808	100.0	43.2	25.1	22.0	7.3	1.6	0.8

¹This State reports number of children affected by decree.

Table 5. Divorces by age of men and women at time of decree, 1985, and divorce rates by age of men and women at time of decree, 1970, 1980, and 1982-85: Divorce-registration area

Based on sample data. Prior to calculation of rates, figures for age not stated were distributed. Rates exclude data for Michigan, Ohio, and South Dakota. Rates per 1,000 married population in specified group enumerated as of April 1 for census years and estimated as of July 1 for all other years]

Age at time of decree	Number		Rate				
	1985	1985	1984	1983	1982	1980	1970
Men							
All ages	577,713	19.4	19.2	19.3	19.4	19.8	14.2
15-19 years ¹	2,453	40.0	42.9	43.3	34.9	29.3	15.1
20-24 years	53,277	49.9	48.2	45.2	47.0	46.9	33.6
25-29 years	109,083	38.4	37.6	40.0	40.3	41.4	30.0
30-34 years	106,740	30.4	31.7	32.4	32.4	33.8	22.3
35-39 years	89,132	26.3	27.1	27.3	27.0	26.8	17.9
40-44 years	62,141	23.2	22.0	21.5	21.8	21.0	13.8
45-49 years	38,550	16.7	16.1	15.9	15.3	14.5	10.7
50-54 years	24,684	11.1	10.7	10.7	10.1	9.5	7.6
55-59 years	15,498	6.8	6.4	6.2	6.1	5.8	5.1
60-64 years	8,375	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.4
65 years and over	8,633	2.1	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9
Not stated	59,147	...	...	...	...	...	...
Women							
All ages	577,713	19.2	18.8	18.9	19.0	19.5	14.0
15-19 years ¹	10,725	48.4	45.5	48.1	45.6	42.4	26.9
20-24 years	86,629	46.8	44.4	43.3	44.5	47.2	33.3
25-29 years	118,824	35.6	35.0	35.7	35.9	37.8	25.7
30-34 years	102,285	28.6	28.1	27.7	28.5	29.2	18.9
35-39 years	79,988	23.4	23.5	23.9	22.9	23.3	14.8
40-44 years	52,418	19.6	18.5	18.2	17.7	16.7	11.9
45-49 years	28,806	12.6	11.8	12.1	11.8	10.8	8.5
50-54 years	15,865	7.4	7.4	7.3	6.8	6.6	5.6
55-59 years	9,306	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.5
60-64 years	5,412	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.3
65 years and over	4,833	1.6	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.3
Not stated	62,622	...	...	...	...	...	...

¹Includes divorces of persons under 15 years of age.

Table 6. Percent distribution of divorces and annulments by age of husband and wife at time of decree, and median and mean ages: Divorce-registration area, 1975-85

[Based on sample data]

<i>Age of husband and wife at time of decree</i>	1985	1984	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975
Husband											
	Percent distribution										
All ages	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20 years	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0
20-24 years	10.3	10.6	11.0	11.7	12.5	13.5	13.9	14.8	14.7	15.1	15.2
25-29 years	21.0	20.9	21.3	22.0	22.8	23.4	23.8	24.3	24.0	24.8	25.1
30-34 years	20.6	20.7	21.0	21.3	22.1	21.4	20.8	20.2	19.8	18.6	18.6
35-39 years	17.2	17.1	16.6	16.3	15.1	14.6	14.2	13.8	13.4	12.9	12.5
40-44 years	12.0	11.8	11.5	10.7	10.0	9.8	9.7	9.3	9.4	9.5	9.3
45-49 years	7.4	7.4	7.2	6.9	6.7	6.5	6.7	6.6	6.9	7.2	7.3
50-54 years	4.8	4.7	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.8	4.9	5.1
55-59 years	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.8
60-64 years	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.6
65 years and over	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.5
	Age in years ¹										
Median age	34.4	34.3	34.0	33.6	33.1	32.7	32.5	32.0	32.4	32.3	32.2
Mean age	36.4	36.2	36.1	35.7	35.4	35.1	35.0	34.8	35.1	35.1	35.0
Wife											
	Percent distribution										
All ages	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20 years	2.1	2.2	2.5	2.7	2.9	3.4	3.6	4.0	3.8	4.1	4.4
20-24 years	16.8	17.3	17.4	18.6	19.5	20.8	21.2	22.7	22.3	22.4	22.5
25-29 years	23.1	23.1	23.6	24.1	24.8	24.6	24.8	24.6	24.5	25.1	25.2
30-34 years	19.9	19.7	19.5	19.9	20.2	19.4	18.7	17.9	17.9	16.7	16.3
35-39 years	15.5	15.4	15.0	14.2	13.1	12.8	12.3	11.8	11.3	11.2	10.9
40-44 years	10.2	9.8	9.5	8.8	8.2	7.7	7.9	7.5	7.7	7.9	7.6
45-49 years	5.6	5.5	5.5	5.1	4.9	4.8	5.0	5.0	5.3	5.6	5.7
50-54 years	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6
55-59 years	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.7	2.0	1.9	2.0
60-64 years	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9
65 years and over	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8
	Age in years ¹										
Median age	31.9	31.7	31.5	31.1	30.6	30.3	30.1	29.7	29.9	29.7	29.5
Mean age	33.7	33.6	33.5	33.1	32.7	32.4	32.3	32.1	32.4	32.3	32.3

¹Medians and means computed on data by single years of age.

Table 7. Percent distribution of divorces and annulments by age of husband and wife at time of marriage, and median and mean ages: Divorce-registration area, 1975-85

[based on sample data]

<i>Age of husband and wife at time of marriage</i>	1985	1984	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975
Husband											
	Percent distribution										
All ages	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20 years	14.2	14.9	15.4	16.1	17.0	18.0	18.4	19.3	18.6	18.9	19.1
20-24 years	41.4	41.9	42.5	43.0	44.0	44.0	44.3	44.7	44.5	44.4	44.8
25-29 years	20.5	20.1	19.7	19.3	18.7	18.4	18.0	17.5	17.4	17.3	17.1
30-34 years	10.3	9.7	9.3	9.0	8.6	8.1	7.9	7.4	7.6	7.4	7.3
35-39 years	5.5	5.4	5.1	5.0	4.6	4.5	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.2
40-44 years	3.4	3.1	3.2	3.0	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.7
45 years and over	4.8	4.9	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.7	4.8	4.8
	Age in years ¹										
Median age	24.1	24.0	23.8	23.7	23.4	23.3	23.2	23.0	23.1	23.1	23.0
Mean age	26.9	26.7	26.6	26.4	26.1	25.9	25.8	25.7	25.9	25.9	25.8
Wife											
	Percent distribution										
All ages	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20 years	32.6	34.0	35.1	36.6	38.3	39.9	41.0	42.8	42.2	42.5	43.3
20-24 years	36.7	36.4	36.3	36.2	35.9	35.5	35.1	34.2	34.0	33.8	33.7
25-29 years	14.4	13.8	13.3	12.7	12.1	11.4	11.0	10.5	10.7	10.3	9.9
30-34 years	7.2	6.8	6.7	6.2	5.8	5.6	5.4	5.0	5.2	5.2	4.8
35-39 years	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.6	3.2	3.1	3.1	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.0
40-44 years	2.3	2.1	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.1
45 years and over	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.7	3.0	3.1	3.1
	Age in years ¹										
Median age	21.8	21.7	21.5	21.3	21.1	20.9	20.9	20.7	20.7	20.7	20.6
Mean age	24.3	24.1	24.0	23.8	23.5	23.3	23.2	23.1	23.3	23.3	23.2

¹Medians and means computed on data by single years of age.

Table 8. Mean ages of divorced husband and wife at time of marriage and at time of decree: Divorce-registration area and each registration State, 1985

[Based on sample data]

Area	Mean age of husband		Mean age of wife	
	At decree	At marriage	At decree	At marriage
Divorce-registration area	36.4	26.9	33.7	24.3
Alabama	35.2	27.4	32.3	24.5
Alaska	35.0	27.7	32.1	24.9
Connecticut	37.8	27.1	35.1	24.4
Delaware	36.4	26.6	33.9	24.1
Georgia	35.3	27.3	32.6	24.6
Hawaii	36.2	27.5	33.6	24.9
Idaho	35.9	28.5	32.9	25.5
Illinois	36.2	27.0	33.6	24.4
Iowa	35.8	26.2	33.3	23.7
Kansas	34.7	27.0	32.2	24.4
Kentucky	35.3	26.8	32.5	24.0
Maryland	37.3	26.4	34.5	23.7
Massachusetts	37.7	26.1	35.3	23.8
Michigan	36.1	26.3	33.6	23.9
Missouri	35.9	27.3	33.2	24.5
Montana	36.8	28.3	33.7	25.2
Nebraska	35.7	26.2	33.2	23.8
New Hampshire	35.9	26.4	33.2	23.7
New York	37.7	27.5	35.2	25.0
Ohio	35.7	26.9	33.3	24.7
Oregon	37.5	28.5	34.9	25.8
Pennsylvania	37.3	25.9	34.6	23.3
Rhode Island	37.2	26.6	34.4	24.0
South Carolina	35.7	25.7	33.2	23.3
South Dakota	35.9	26.1	33.2	23.3
Tennessee	35.3	27.1	32.5	24.4
Utah	34.7	26.9	32.3	24.4
Vermont	37.1	26.6	34.5	24.0
Virginia	36.7	26.1	34.1	23.6
Wisconsin	36.5	26.1	33.9	23.6
Wyoming	34.7	27.3	31.8	24.5

Table 9. Mean and median duration of marriage to decree: Divorce-registration area, 1970-85

[Based on sample data]

Year	Mean	Median	Year	Mean	Median
1985	9.5	6.8	1977	9.2	6.6
1984	9.5	6.9	1976	9.2	6.5
1983	9.6	7.0	1975	9.2	6.5
1982	9.4	7.0	1974	9.3	6.5
1981	9.3	7.0	1973	9.4	6.6
1980	9.2	6.8	1972	9.5	6.7
1979	9.3	6.8	1971	9.5	6.7
1978	9.1	6.6	1970	9.5	6.7

Table 10. Percent distribution of divorces and annulments by duration of marriage to decree, and median and mean duration of marriage to decree: Divorce-registration area and each registration State, 1985

[Based on sample data]

Area	Total	Less than 1 year	1-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-19 years	20 years or more	Median	Mean
Divorce-registration area	100.0	4.0	33.9	26.2	14.8	9.3	11.8	6.8	9.5
Alabama	100.0	10.3	38.8	23.1	12.3	6.2	9.3	5.1	7.9
Alaska	100.0	5.9	43.9	26.3	11.7	6.0	6.3	5.0	7.3
Connecticut	100.0	1.4	31.7	25.0	15.4	10.6	15.8	7.9	10.7
Delaware	100.0	2.1	32.5	27.9	15.8	9.6	12.0	7.2	9.8
Georgia	100.0	8.4	39.3	23.2	12.4	7.9	8.9	5.3	8.1
Hawaii	100.0	3.3	37.5	27.6	14.2	7.8	9.6	6.2	8.8
Idaho	100.0	7.2	39.5	25.9	12.0	7.2	8.1	5.4	7.9
Illinois	100.0	4.4	35.3	25.8	14.4	8.8	11.3	6.6	9.2
Iowa	100.0	2.8	33.5	28.3	14.7	9.1	11.7	6.9	9.6
Kansas	100.0	6.6	42.0	24.8	12.3	5.7	8.6	5.2	7.8
Kentucky	100.0	7.5	36.3	24.3	13.2	9.0	9.7	5.9	8.6
Maryland	100.0	0.4	24.0	30.2	18.8	11.5	15.1	8.9	11.3
Massachusetts	100.0	0.3	23.9	28.2	18.6	12.5	16.6	9.4	11.8
Michigan	100.0	2.5	31.6	27.4	15.3	11.1	12.1	7.4	10.0
Missouri	100.0	5.3	37.8	25.8	13.3	8.1	9.9	5.9	8.7
Montana	100.0	5.3	38.2	25.2	13.9	7.7	9.8	6.0	8.6
Nebraska	100.0	2.8	35.9	25.6	14.8	9.2	11.7	6.7	9.5
New Hampshire	100.0	1.9	32.5	26.9	16.1	10.2	12.5	7.4	10.0
New York	100.0	2.4	32.7	25.0	16.0	10.2	13.8	7.5	10.3
Ohio	100.0	4.4	37.1	26.9	13.2	8.5	9.9	6.2	8.8
Oregon	100.0	3.3	36.0	26.2	15.4	8.9	10.1	6.6	9.1
Pennsylvania	100.0	1.2	25.2	28.0	17.4	11.9	16.1	8.9	11.4
Rhode Island	100.0	0.9	29.0	29.1	17.2	10.5	13.3	8.0	10.6
South Carolina	100.0	2.1	32.6	27.4	15.8	9.9	12.4	7.3	10.0
South Dakota	100.0	4.4	36.4	24.6	14.1	8.5	12.1	6.4	9.4
Tennessee	100.0	8.4	38.3	24.9	12.1	7.2	9.1	5.5	8.1
Utah	100.0	6.5	40.9	25.2	12.7	7.3	7.5	5.3	7.8
Vermont	100.0	0.7	29.7	27.6	18.1	10.9	13.0	8.1	10.7
Virginia	100.0	0.8	29.3	28.8	16.7	10.4	14.0	8.0	10.6
Wisconsin	100.0	1.4	30.0	28.1	16.3	9.9	14.4	8.0	10.4
Wyoming	100.0	6.5	42.2	26.6	12.3	6.1	6.2	5.2	7.4

¹Medians and means computed on data by single years of duration.

Technical notes

Definitions

Divorces include absolute divorces, annulments, and dissolutions of marriage. Data are tabulated by State where decree was granted, not by State of residence. For the petitioner, however, State of residence is defined as State where decree was granted, regardless of usual residence. Date of divorce is defined as the date the decree was granted.

Sources of data

Nationwide counts

Data in tables 1 and 2 come from the number of divorce decrees reported annually by States and counties to the National Center for Health Statistics.

When divorces are not reported for counties, the following criteria are applied for the data shown in table 2:

1. The State totals are published as reported even when there are nonreporting counties.
2. If the population of nonreporting areas in the latest available census is less than 1 percent of the State population, the State total does not have a footnote to indicate that the data are incomplete.
3. If the population of nonreporting areas is 1.0–9.9 percent of the State population, data for the State and division have the footnote “Data are incomplete.” Rates are computed and no estimates are made for the missing data.
4. If the population of nonreporting areas is 10 percent or more of the State population, the State and division totals have the footnote “Data are incomplete,” and the divorce rate is not computed. Estimates are made for inclusion in the totals for the region and the United States and rates are computed. Figures for the region and United States have the footnote “Figures include estimates.”

Sample data

Information about the characteristics of divorcing couples is available only from States that participate in the divorce-registration area (DRA). Data in tables 3–10 come from a probability sample of divorce records from the 31 States that participated in the DRA in 1985. In 1975–77, 29 States participated in the DRA; in 1978, 28 States participated; in 1979–80, 30 States participated; and in 1981–85, 31 States participated. About 48 percent of the divorces in the United States took place in DRA States in 1985.

Divorce sample

The probability sample of divorce records for 1985 was selected by using five different sampling rates. For each State in the DRA, either 5, 10, 20, 50, or 100 percent of the divorce

records were included. Sampling rates were selected so that the expected sample would contain at least 2,500 records for each State. This criterion required 100 percent sampling for Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Montana, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Wyoming. One hundred percent of the divorce records were included for eight additional States—Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, and Virginia. These States supplied State-coded data tapes of 100 percent of their divorce records through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program.

The table on this page shows sampling errors for estimates that constitute 1, 10, 25, 50, 75, 90, and 99 percent of the annual divorce totals. These sampling errors are shown for the DRA for 1975, 1984, and 1985, and for each DRA State for 1985.

Sampling error of estimated percent: Divorce-registration area, 1975, 1984, and 1985, and each registration State, 1985

[Figures for Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming have no sampling errors in 1985 because all records were tabulated]

Area and year	Sampling error of estimated percent			
	1 or 99	10 or 90	25 or 75	50
Divorce-registration area				
1985 (31 States)	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
1984 (31 States)	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
1975 (29 States)	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2
Registration States, 1985				
Alabama	0.2	0.6	0.8	0.9
Alaska . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Connecticut	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.5
Delaware . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Georgia	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Hawaii . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Idaho	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.6
Illinois . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Iowa	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.5
Kansas	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.9
Kentucky	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.7
Maryland	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Massachusetts	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.7
Michigan	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Missouri . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Montana . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Nebraska . . . . .	...	...	...	...
New Hampshire . . . . .	...	...	...	...
New York . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Ohio	0.2	0.6	0.8	0.9
Oregon	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Pennsylvania	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.7
Rhode Island . . . . .	...	...	...	...
South Carolina . . . . .	...	...	...	...
South Dakota . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Tennessee	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.9
Utah	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.5
Vermont . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Virginia . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Wisconsin	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Wyoming . . . . .	...	...	...	...

Estimates of children involved in divorce

To make the national estimates of children involved in divorce, shown in table 3, it was assumed that the average number of children per decree for the United States was the same as the average in the DRA States. This average was multiplied by the national divorce total to estimate the national number of children involved in divorce. For 1950-59, the average number of children per decree was calculated using data from all reporting States; for 1960, from a nationwide sample; for 1961-69, from 16 States; and, thereafter, from all DRA States.

Computation of rates, percent distributions, medians, and means

Divorce rates for 1985 are based on populations estimated as of July 1, 1985.^{3,4} Percent distributions, means, and medians exclude cases for which the pertinent information (number of children, duration of marriage, or age) is not stated. Mean and median age at marriage and mean and median age at decree were computed using ungrouped data.

³U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1986. Press release CB87-02 (Dec. 31.) To be published in *Current Population Reports*. Series P-25.

⁴Unpublished estimates by marital status prepared by the U.S. Bureau of the Census consistent with "Estimates of the population of the United States by age, sex, and race, 1980 to 1985." *Current Population Reports*. Series P-25, p. 985. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office. 1986.

This report represents summary tabulations from the final divorce statistics for 1985. More detailed tabulations for 1985 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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