

# Monthly

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## VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

### Advance Report

# Final Divorce Statistics, 1976

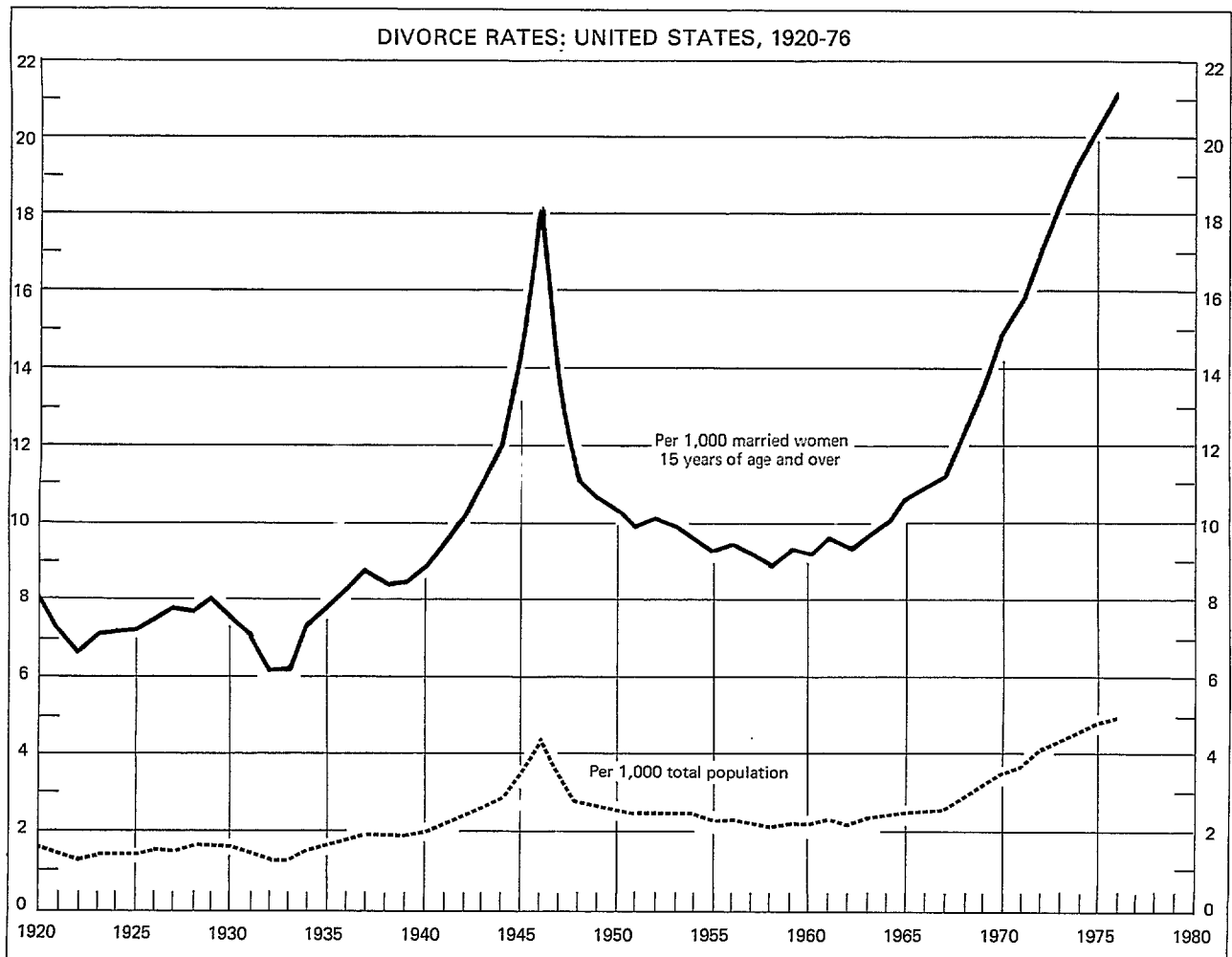
FROM THE  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

During 1976, an estimated 1,083,000 divorces were granted in the United States. This total was 47,000, or 4.5 percent, higher than that for 1975 (1,036,000), yielding the smallest annual increase in the number of divorces since 1967.

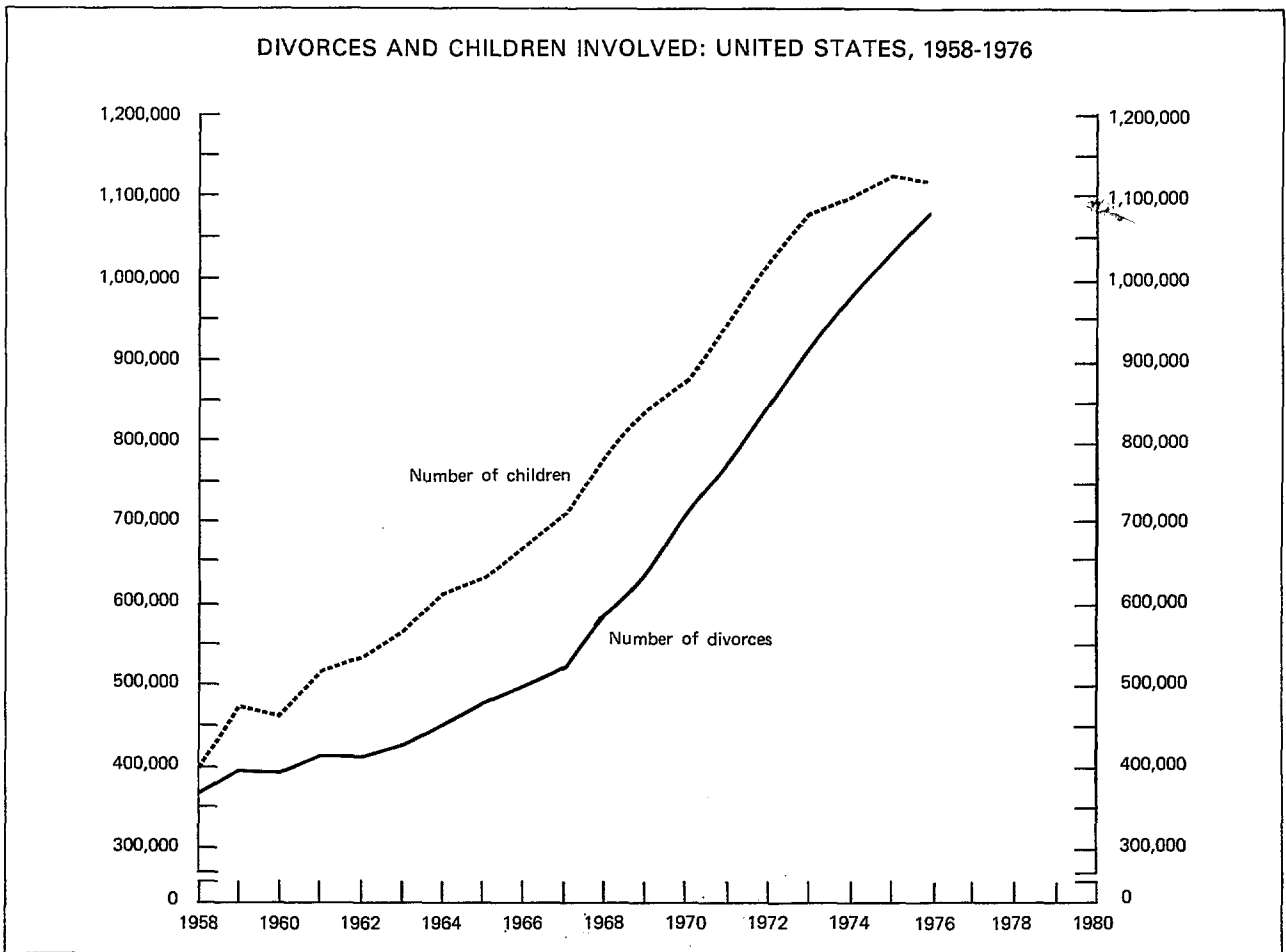
The national divorce rate for 1976 was 5.0 per 1,000 population, only slightly above the rate for 1975 (4.9). This represented a 2-percent

increase, a marked slowdown in the growth of the divorce rate. During the previous 8 years (1968-75), annual increases in the divorce rate ranged from 4.5 to 11.5 percent.

Showing a similar tapering off, the divorce rate for married women was 21.1 per 1,000 for 1976. This was an increase of 3.9 percent over the rate for 1975 (20.3), in contrast to the



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annual increases ranging from 5.2 to 11.6 percent during the preceding 8 years.

Regional divorce rates showed the usual pronounced variation in 1976. The rate was 3.2 per 1,000 population in the Northeast Region, 4.7 in the North Central, 5.7 in the South, and 6.7 in the West.

For the 29 States that participated in the divorce-registration area (DRA), the median duration of marriages ending in divorce was 6.5 years in 1976, the same as in 1975 and 1974. The median duration of marriages ending in divorce for the DRA had gradually declined to this level from a peak of 7.5 years in 1963.

According to data obtained from the DRA States on ages of divorcing spouses, the distribution of age at time of divorce, for both husbands and wives, became somewhat more peaked between 1971 and 1976. Of those divorcing in 1971 for whom age was reported, 51.3 percent of the husbands and 47.2 percent

of the wives were between 25 and 39 years of age at time of decree, while in 1976 the corresponding percentages increased to 56.3 and 52.9, respectively. Between 1971 and 1976, the percentage under 25 years of age at divorce declined from 17.8 to 16.1 percent for husbands and from 29.3 to 26.5 percent for wives; there were similar declines in the percentages over 39 years of age at divorce.

The total number of children under 18 years of age involved in divorce is estimated annually for the United States, based on data reported by States in the divorce-registration area. The estimate for 1976 was 1,117,000, a decline of 0.5 percent from the 1975 estimate (1,123,000). This was the first decline in the total number of children affected by divorce since 1960.

The average number of children per divorce has been declining for many years, from a maximum of 1.36 in 1964 to 1.08 in 1975 and 1.03 in 1976. Of the couples divorced in the DRA

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States during 1976, 44 percent reported no children under 18 years of age, that is, they either had no children or their children were grown. The remaining 56 percent reported one or more children, the majority being small families with one or two children. Only 11 percent reported three or more children. In 1964, when the average number of children per decree was highest, data for the reporting States showed 37 percent of the divorcing couples with no children under 18 years of age and 63 percent with one or more children; 20 percent reported three or more children.

Although couples divorcing in recent years have, on the average, fewer children than couples divorcing earlier, children of today have a greater likelihood of being affected by a divorce than children of former years. The number of children involved in divorce per 1,000 children in the total population has grown from 8.7 in 1964 to 16.9 in 1975 and 17.1 in 1976.

The statistics for the divorce-registration area 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 1. DIVORCES AND RATES: UNITED STATES, EACH REGION, DIVISION, AND STATE, 1974-76

[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, 1974, 1975, and 1976]

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 .....	1,083,000	<sup>1</sup> 1,036,000	<sup>1</sup> 977,000	5.0	<sup>1</sup> 4.9	<sup>1</sup> 4.6	West North Central:						
Regions:							Minnesota.....	413,822	13,188	12,237	43.5	3.4	3.1
Northeast.....	156,000	153,000	146,000	3.2	3.1	3.0	Iowa.....	10,817	10,304	9,480	3.8	3.6	3.3
North Central.....	273,000	<sup>1</sup> 261,000	250,000	4.7	<sup>1</sup> 4.5	4.3	Missouri.....	25,414	24,527	22,088	5.3	5.1	4.6
South.....	394,000	<sup>1</sup> 374,000	<sup>1</sup> 348,000	5.7	<sup>1</sup> 5.5	<sup>1</sup> 5.2	North Dakota.....	1,861	1,713	1,588	2.9	2.7	2.5
West.....	260,000	248,000	233,000	6.7	6.5	6.3	South Dakota.....	2,350	2,228	2,016	3.4	3.3	3.0
							Nebraska.....	5,862	5,570	5,193	3.8	3.6	3.4
							Kansas.....	12,833	12,559	11,484	5.6	5.5	5.1
							South Atlantic:						
Northeast:							Delaware.....	3,233	2,761	2,354	5.6	4.8	4.1
New England.....	43,722	43,182	<sup>2</sup> 40,034	3.6	3.5	<sup>2</sup> 3.3	Maryland.....	16,101	15,398	15,070	3.9	3.8	3.7
Middle Atlantic.....	112,576	110,013	106,457	3.0	3.0	2.9	District of Columbia.....	3,092	3,789	3,176	4.4	5.3	4.4
							Virginia.....	21,381	19,491	16,704	4.2	3.9	3.4
North Central:							West Virginia.....	8,893	8,632	7,176	4.9	4.8	4.0
East North Central <sup>2</sup> .....	199,938	186,205	185,708	4.9	*	4.5	North Carolina.....	24,327	22,107	20,049	4.4	4.1	3.7
West North Central.....	72,959	70,089	64,086	4.3	4.2	3.8	South Carolina.....	10,641	9,671	8,816	3.7	3.4	3.2
							Georgia.....	31,156	29,483	26,918	6.3	6.0	5.5
South:							Florida.....	63,223	63,446	59,611	7.5	7.6	7.4
South Atlantic.....	182,047	174,778	159,874	5.4	5.2	4.8	East South Central:						
East South Central.....	79,328	74,423	70,505	5.8	5.5	5.3	Kentucky.....	16,027	14,508	13,791	4.7	4.3	4.1
West South Central <sup>2</sup> .....	132,309	122,783	115,935	6.2	*	*	Tennessee.....	27,002	24,611	23,725	6.4	5.9	5.7
							Alabama.....	24,056	23,001	21,123	6.6	6.4	5.9
West:							Mississippi.....	12,243	12,303	11,866	5.2	5.2	5.1
Mountain.....	75,534	70,721	66,867	7.7	7.3	7.1	West South Central:						
Pacific.....	184,888	177,032	165,722	6.4	6.3	6.0	Arkansas <sup>2</sup> .....	18,365	16,737	15,840	8.7	7.9	7.7
							Louisiana <sup>2</sup> .....	12,550	8,720	7,812	3.3	*	*
New England:							Oklahoma.....	21,489	20,641	<sup>3</sup> 22,521	7.8	7.6	8.3
Maine.....	5,540	5,543	4,876	5.2	5.2	4.7	Texas.....	79,905	76,685	69,762	6.4	6.3	5.8
New Hampshire.....	4,322	4,241	4,051	5.3	5.2	5.0	Mountain:						
Vermont.....	1,905	1,921	<sup>2</sup> 1,623	4.0	4.1	<sup>2</sup> 3.5	Montana.....	4,850	4,286	3,940	6.4	5.7	5.4
Massachusetts.....	16,974	16,581	16,116	2.9	2.8	2.8	Idaho.....	5,699	5,203	4,808	6.9	6.3	6.0
Rhode Island.....	3,276	2,658	2,522	3.5	2.9	2.7	Wyoming.....	2,850	2,835	2,523	7.3	7.6	7.0
Connecticut.....	11,705	12,238	10,846	3.8	4.0	3.5	Colorado.....	17,520	15,733	15,082	6.8	6.2	6.0
							New Mexico.....	9,118	8,413	7,863	7.8	7.3	7.0
Middle Atlantic:							Arizona.....	19,029	17,577	16,936	8.4	7.9	7.9
New York.....	54,229	55,612	54,015	3.0	3.1	3.0	Utah.....	6,170	6,132	5,670	5.0	5.1	4.8
New Jersey.....	21,816	19,446	19,870	3.0	2.7	2.7	Nevada.....	10,298	10,542	10,045	16.9	17.8	17.5
Pennsylvania.....	36,531	34,955	32,572	3.1	3.0	2.8	Pacific:						
							Washington.....	27,072	25,848	23,909	7.5	7.3	6.9
East North Central:							Oregon.....	16,070	15,562	13,538	6.9	6.8	6.0
Ohio.....	59,251	52,626	49,239	5.5	4.9	4.6	California.....	133,824	128,492	121,714	6.2	6.1	5.8
Indiana <sup>2</sup> .....	31,193	28,755	<sup>3</sup> 33,908	5.9	*	<sup>3</sup> 6.4	Alaska.....	3,210	2,865	2,450	8.4	8.1	7.3
Illinois.....	51,810	50,954	48,361	4.6	4.6	4.3	Hawaii.....	4,712	4,265	4,111	5.3	4.9	4.9
Michigan.....	43,101	40,782	41,850	4.7	4.5	4.6							
Wisconsin.....	14,583	13,088	12,350	3.2	2.8	2.7							

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

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

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

<sup>4</sup> Data are estimated.

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Table 2. DIVORCES AND ANNULMENTS AND RATES: UNITED STATES, 1950-76

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

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

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

Table 3. MEDIAN DURATION OF MARRIAGE PRIOR TO DIVORCE OR ANNULMENT: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1974-76

[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 1974, 1975, and 1976]

Area	Median duration of marriage		
	1976	1975	1974
Divorce-registration area.....	6.5	6.5	6.5
Alabama.....	4.8	4.7	5.0
Alaska.....	5.2	5.1	5.1
California.....	6.9	6.8	6.7
Connecticut.....	8.2	8.2	8.1
Georgia.....	5.3	5.2	5.2
Hawaii.....	5.4	5.4	5.3
Idaho.....	4.6	4.8	4.7
Illinois.....	6.1	6.1	6.1
Iowa.....	5.7	5.5	5.6
Kansas.....	5.0	5.2	5.2
Kentucky.....	5.6	5.9	5.5
Maryland.....	7.9	8.3	8.5
Michigan.....	6.6	6.8	6.7
Missouri.....	5.7	5.6	5.5
Montana.....	5.0	4.7	4.8
Nebraska.....	5.8	5.9	5.9
New York.....	7.9	8.0	8.0
Ohio.....	5.9	6.0	6.3
Oregon.....	6.0	5.8	5.8
Pennsylvania.....	7.8	7.7	7.7
Rhode Island.....	8.1	7.8	8.0
South Carolina.....	6.8	6.6	6.8
South Dakota.....	5.6	5.6	5.6
Tennessee.....	5.2	5.3	5.2
Utah.....	5.1	4.9	4.9
Vermont.....	7.6	7.5	7.9
Virginia.....	7.7	7.7	7.8
Wisconsin.....	7.2	7.0	7.2
Wyoming.....	4.3	4.7	4.8

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

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-----	*

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Table 4. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN DIVORCES AND ANNULMENTS:  
UNITED STATES, 1954-76

[Refers only to events occurring within the United States. For 1960-76 estimated from frequencies based on sample; for all other years estimated from total counts. For estimating methods see Technical Notes]

Year	Estimated number of children involved	Average number of children per decree
1976.....	1,117,000	1.03
1975.....	1,123,000	1.08
1974.....	1,099,000	1.12
1973.....	1,079,000	1.17
1972.....	1,021,000	1.20
1971.....	946,000	1.22
1970.....	870,000	1.22
1969.....	840,000	1.31
1968.....	784,000	1.34
1967.....	701,000	1.34
1966.....	669,000	1.34
1965.....	630,000	1.32
1964 <sup>1</sup> .....	613,000	1.36
1963 <sup>1</sup> .....	562,000	1.31
1962 <sup>1</sup> .....	532,000	1.29
1961 <sup>1</sup> .....	516,000	1.25
1960.....	463,000	1.18
1959.....	468,000	1.18
1958.....	398,000	1.08
1957.....	379,000	0.99
1956.....	361,000	0.95
1955.....	347,000	0.92
1954.....	341,000	0.90

<sup>1</sup> Revised.

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Table 5. DIVORCES AND ANNULMENTS BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN REPORTED: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1976

[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.....	656,535	281,842	160,922	120,079	47,152	16,906	8,367	21,267
Alabama .....	24,190	10,960	6,150	3,940	1,460	570	350	760
Alaska.....	3,212	1,498	746	604	222	68	34	40
California.....	133,810	58,200	31,270	23,260	7,570	2,290	880	10,340
Connecticut.....	11,780	4,815	2,705	2,465	1,120	380	175	120
Georgia .....	31,160	14,590	7,740	5,420	2,090	570	230	520
Hawaii .....	4,704	1,942	1,134	954	352	216	98	8
Idaho <sup>1</sup> .....	5,698	2,580	1,162	880	420	136	94	426
Illinois .....	51,560	21,940	12,950	9,160	3,970	1,490	930	1,120
Iowa .....	10,730	4,105	2,825	2,110	895	400	205	190
Kansas .....	12,885	5,570	3,370	2,485	920	305	185	50
Kentucky .....	15,940	7,080	4,010	2,890	870	410	180	500
Maryland .....	15,880	6,600	4,610	2,830	960	370	210	300
Michigan .....	43,080	17,250	8,870	7,640	3,580	1,130	510	4,100
Missouri .....	25,470	11,390	6,538	4,460	1,817	632	322	311
Montana .....	4,858	2,062	1,190	944	388	146	56	72
Nebraska <sup>1</sup> .....	5,874	2,478	1,460	1,160	483	189	104	-
New York.....	54,229	23,646	12,819	10,046	4,455	1,593	771	899
Ohio .....	59,320	24,880	15,200	11,500	4,760	1,900	940	140
Oregon.....	16,110	7,570	3,610	3,060	1,110	470	120	170
Pennsylvania.....	36,450	14,610	8,900	7,520	3,040	1,140	600	640
Rhode Island .....	3,276	1,207	830	623	318	134	73	91
South Carolina.....	10,642	4,614	2,903	2,013	716	281	111	4
South Dakota .....	2,350	873	612	493	227	92	47	6
Tennessee .....	27,010	12,660	7,210	4,530	1,660	510	310	130
Utah .....	5,956	2,166	1,520	1,218	520	218	138	176
Vermont.....	1,905	694	453	401	196	86	62	13
Virginia.....	21,416	9,505	5,759	3,918	1,426	505	224	79
Wisconsin.....	14,190	5,075	3,690	3,065	1,365	605	370	20
Wyoming .....	2,850	1,282	686	490	242	70	38	42

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

This report represents summary tabulations from the final divorce 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.

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 1971-76, 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 1961-76 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 1971-76.

Divorce Samples

Sample data used to estimate the 1976 frequencies in table 5 and the frequencies used to compute median duration of marriage for 1974-76 in table 3 were selected by using four different sampling rates, including 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. Seven States—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

SAMPLING ERROR OF ESTIMATED FREQUENCY EXPRESSED AS PERCENTAGE OF AREA TOTAL: DIVORCE-REGISTRATION AREA, 1974-76 AND EACH REGISTRATION STATE, 1976

[Figures for Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, and Virginia have no sampling errors in 1976 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:				
1976 (29 States) .....	207	624	900	1,040
1975 (29 States) .....	206	620	894	1,033
1974 (29 States) <sup>1</sup> .....	194	585	845	975
Registration States, 1976:				
Alabama .....	46	140	201	233
Alaska .....	6	17	25	28
California .....	109	329	475	549
Connecticut .....	22	65	94	108
Georgia .....	53	159	229	265
Hawaii .....	7	21	30	34
Idaho .....	7	23	33	38
Illinois .....	68	205	296	342
Iowa .....	21	62	90	104
Kansas .....	23	68	98	113
Kentucky .....	38	114	165	190
Maryland .....	38	114	165	190
Michigan .....	62	187	270	311
Missouri .....	...	...	...	...
Montana .....	7	21	30	35
Nebraska .....	...	...	...	...
New York .....	...	...	...	...
Ohio .....	73	219	316	365
Oregon .....	38	114	165	190
Pennsylvania .....	57	172	248	287
Rhode Island .....	...	...	...	...
South Carolina .....	...	...	...	...
South Dakota .....	...	...	...	...
Tennessee .....	49	148	213	246
Utah .....	8	24	35	40
Vermont .....	...	...	...	...
Virginia .....	...	...	...	...
Wisconsin .....	24	73	105	121
Wyoming .....	5	16	23	27

<sup>1</sup>Excludes Wayne County, Michigan.

States, sampling rates depended on the size of the annual divorce total for each State. South Dakota was the only State 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 1976 data and only for the divorce-registration area for 1974 and 1975 data.