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Advance Report of Final Divorce Statistics, 1984

Divorces and divorce rates

More couples divorced in the United States in 1984 than in 1983, and the divorce rate rose slightly. In 1984, 1,169,000 couples divorced, about 1 percent more than the 1,158,000 couples who divorced in 1983 (table 1). The divorce rate per 1,000 total population rose from 4.9 in 1983 to 5.0 in 1984.

There was also an increase in the divorce rate when the population on which the rate is based is restricted to married women, that is, women truly at risk of divorce. The divorce rate per 1,000 married women 15 years of age and older was 21.5 in 1984, about 1 percent above the rate for 1983 (21.3). This divorce rate has exceeded 20 per 1,000 each year since 1974. Thus, over 2 percent of married women divorce annually.

The long-term trend in the number of divorces and the divorce rate has been upward (figure 1). Two peaks are evident for these measures. The first peak occurred in 1946, soon after World War II, when the number of divorces reached 610,000 and the divorce rate reached 4.3 per 1,000 total population (table 1). The second, higher peak occurred at the beginning of this decade. The number of divorces peaked at 1,213,000 in 1981 and the divorce rate peaked at 5.3 per 1,000 population in 1979 and 1981. Since 1981 the divorce rate has fluctuated between 4.9 and 5.0. The trend in the divorce rate per 1,000 married women 15 years and older was similar. This rate peaked at 17.9 in 1946 and reached a second peak of 22.8 in 1979.

In 1984, divorce rates were lowest in the Northeast Region and highest in the West Region (table 2). The divorce rate per 1,000 population was 3.6 in the Northeast, 4.4 in the Midwest, 5.5 in the South, and 6.0 in the West. Between 1983 and 1984 the divorce rate was unchanged in the Northeast, fell slightly in the Midwest and South, and rose in the West.

Among States, divorce rates ranged from a low of 3.0 in Massachusetts to a high of 15.2 in Nevada. In a majority of States, divorce rates fell between 1983 and 1984. Among the 43 States and the District of Columbia which had complete

and comparable data for both years, the divorce rate fell in 27 States, rose in 9 States, and remained the same in 7 States and the District of Columbia. Vermont and Georgia reported the largest decreases. The divorce rate dropped 10 percent in Vermont (from 4.9 to 4.4), and 9 percent in Georgia (from 5.8 to 5.3). Among the nine States where the divorce rate rose, New Jersey, Kansas, and Florida reported the largest increases. The divorce rate rose 6 percent in New Jersey and Kansas, from 3.6 to 3.8 in New Jersey and from 5.0 to 5.3 in Kansas. The divorce rate rose 5 percent in Florida, from 6.6 to 6.9.

Overall, divorce rates were higher in 1984 than they had been a decade earlier. For the United States the 1984 divorce rate of 5.0 was 9 percent higher than the 1974 rate (4.6). Among the 42 reporting areas with complete and comparable data for 1974 and 1984, 30 areas had higher divorce rates in 1984, 11 had higher rates in 1974, and 1 had the same rate in both years. The West was the only region where the divorce rate was lower in 1984 than in 1974.

Data for the preceding discussion come from reports (provided annually by the 50 States and the District of Columbia) of the number of divorces. For the following discussion of children involved in divorce, ages at divorce and at marriage, and duration of marriage, detailed information on the characteristics of divorcing couples 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 1984.

Children involved in divorce

Each year parents of over a million children divorce. In 1984, 1,081,000 children under 18 years of age were affected by divorce (table 3). The number of children involved in divorce has exceeded 1 million every year since 1971, peaking at 1,181,000 in 1979 (figure 2).

The average number of children per decree granted has generally been falling since 1964 when it peaked at 1.36. By

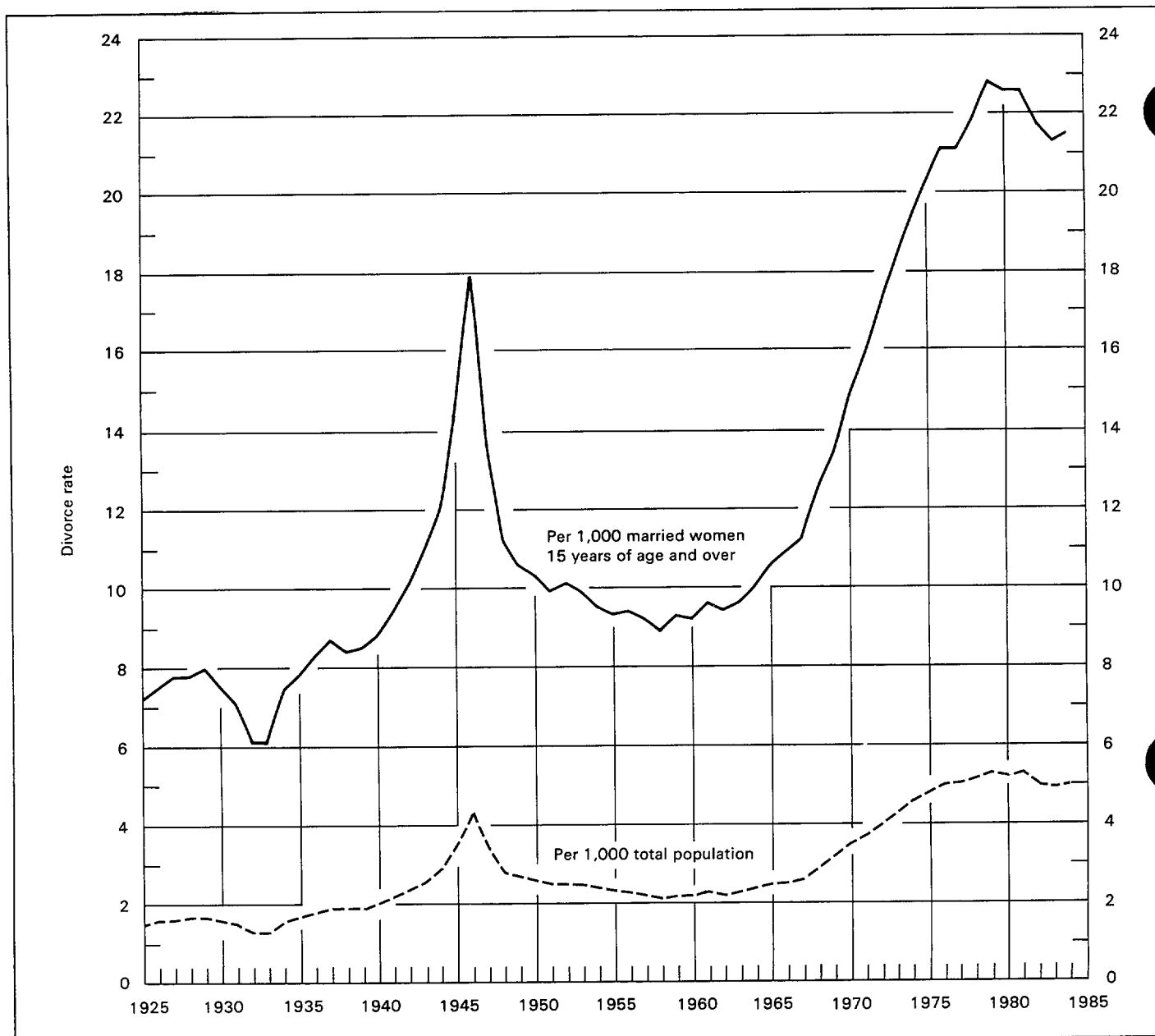


Figure 1. Divorce rates: United States, 1925-84

1984 this measure had fallen to 0.92 children per decree, the same average as in 1955. In contrast, the number of children involved in divorce per 1,000 children under 18 years of age continued to rise until 1981. This rate rose from 6.1 in 1951 to 18.7 in 1981 and fell back to 17.2 in 1984.

Children's involvement in divorce varied by State. The average number of children per decree ranged from 0.79 in Maryland and Tennessee to 1.22 in Vermont (table 4). The rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age ranged from 11.8 in Maryland to 24.6 in Wyoming.

A majority of divorcing couples in the DRA had at least one child under age 18 years at the time of the decree. Twenty-six percent had one child, 20 percent had two children, and 8

percent had three or more children, while 47 percent had no children (table 5). The percent of divorcing couples with no children ranged from 37 percent in Nebraska to 52 percent in New York and Tennessee.

Age

In general, divorce rates decreased with age. In 1984 among married women in the DRA, divorce rates were highest, 45.5 per 1,000, at ages 15-19 years (table 6). Divorce rates fell steadily for each successive age group. Women age 35-39 years were only half as likely to divorce as teenage women, and women age 45-49 years were only one-quarter as likely

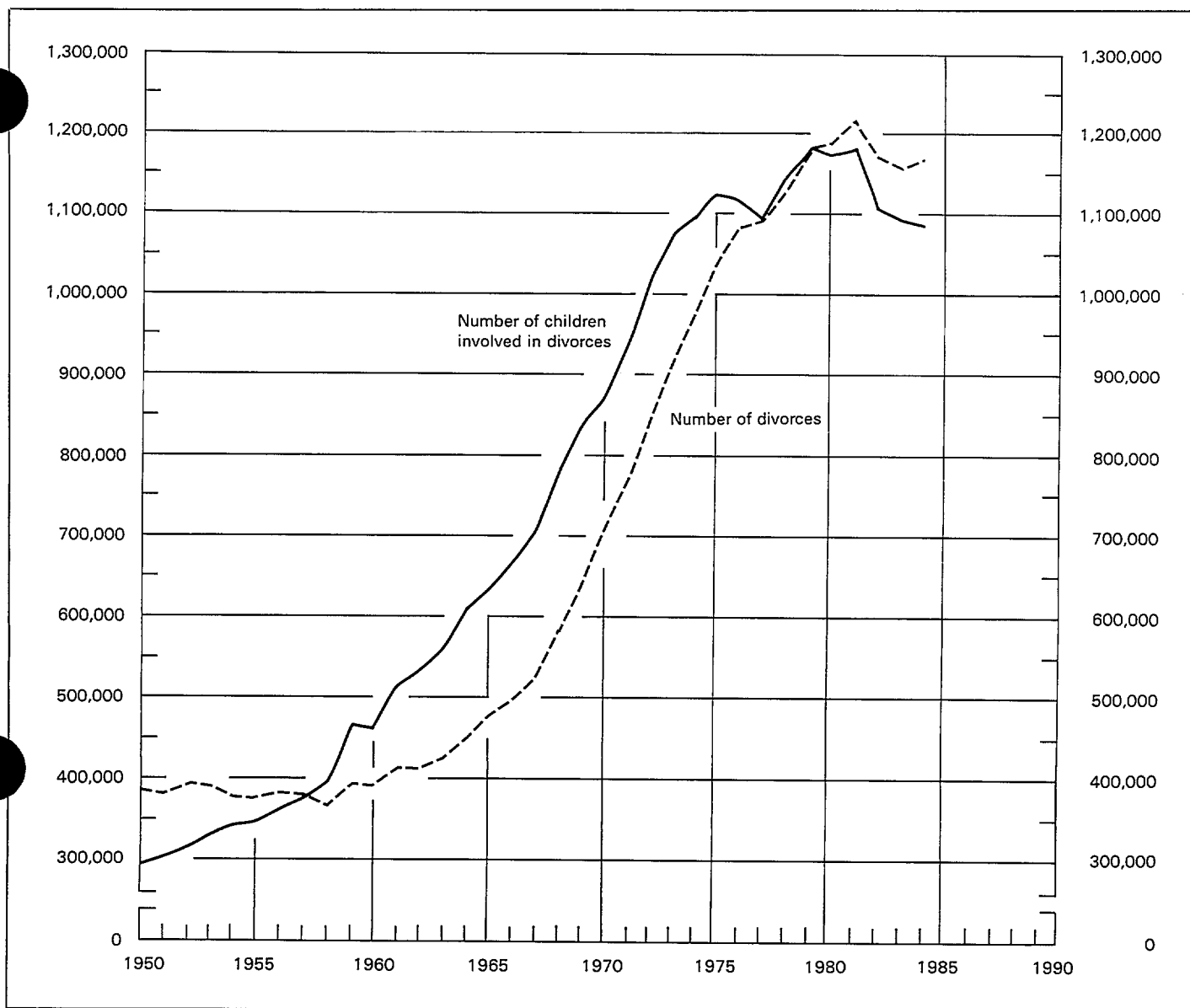


Figure 2. Divorces and children involved: United States, 1950-84

divorce. Among married men, the divorce rate was highest (48.2) for ages 20-24 years, even higher than the rate for teenagers (42.9). Rates fell steadily with age thereafter.

For the United States, the divorce rate for married women age 15 years and over rose from 21.3 to 21.5 between 1983 and 1984, but for the DRA, the rate dropped from 18.9 to 18.8. For men in the DRA, the rate dropped from 19.3 to 19.2 (table 6). Between 1983 and 1984 there were only minor changes, and no clear trend, in the divorce rates calculated for specific 5-year age groups. Rates fell for 11 of the age groups, stayed the same for 1 group (men age 50-54 years), and rose for the remaining 10 age groups.

The divorce rate for married men age 15 years and over was higher than for married women age 15 years and over.

This inconsistency arose because fewer men than women were reported as married in the U.S. Bureau of the Census population estimates that were used to calculate divorce rates. Thus the same number of divorces, 567,783 for the DRA in 1984, was divided by a smaller base population for men than for women.

The average age at divorce remained nearly steady for both sexes between 1974 and 1980 and then began to rise. For men the average (mean) age rose from 35.1 years in 1980 to 36.2 in 1984 (table 7). For women the average age rose from 32.4 years in 1980 to 33.6 in 1984. Between 1974 and 1984 the percent of persons divorcing at ages 30-44 years grew while the percent divorcing before age 25 years decreased. The percent of divorces granted to older couples was small and

fluctuated very little during the decade. In both 1974 and 1984, 1.6 percent of divorcing men and 0.8 percent of divorcing women were 65 years of age and over.

The average (mean) age at which divorcing spouses had been married rose after 1980, from 25.9 to 26.7 years for men and from 23.3 to 24.1 years for women (table 8). The percent of divorces in which the husband had married while a teenager fell from 19.5 in 1974 to 14.9 in 1984; the percent of divorces in which the wife had married while a teenager fell from 43.8 in 1974 to 34.0 in 1984.

The average ages at marriage and divorce varied among States in 1984 (table 9). Men in Wyoming divorced at the youngest average age (34.4 years), and men in Massachusetts divorced at the oldest average age (37.9 years). Women in South Dakota and Wyoming divorced at the youngest average age (31.8), and women in Massachusetts divorced at the oldest average age (35.3 years). Divorcing men in South Carolina had married at the youngest average age (25.7 years) and in Idaho at the oldest average age (28.3 years). Divorcing women

had married at the youngest average age in Pennsylvania and South Carolina (23.2 years) and at the oldest average age in Oregon (25.5 years).

Duration of dissolving marriages

In 1984 divorcing couples had been married 9.5 years on average, the same average as in 1970 (table 10). Average duration fell to 9.1 years between 1970 and 1978, rose to a peak of 9.6 years in 1983, and dropped back to 9.5 years in 1984. Among DRA States in 1984, the average (mean) duration of marriage ranged from 7.3 years in Wyoming to 11.9 years in Massachusetts (table 11). The largest percent of divorces were granted to couples married 1-4 years (33.6 percent). Only 4.2 percent of the divorces in the DRA were granted within 1 year of marriage. Alabama reported the largest percent of divorces granted within 1 year of marriage (10.6 percent) while Maryland, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Virginia reported less than 1 percent.

Table 1. Divorces and annulments and rates: United States, 1940-84

[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
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, 1974, 1983, and 1984

[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 tables 4 and 5. Rates per 1,000 population in each area estimated as of July 1]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1984	1983	1974	1984	1983	1974
United States.....	11,169,000	1,158,000	1,977,000	15.0	4.9	14.6
Regions:						
Northeast.....	179,000	178,000	146,000	3.6	3.6	3.0
Midwest ²	263,000	268,000	250,000	4.4	4.6	4.3
South.....	1,447,000	444,000	1,348,000	15.5	5.6	15.1
West.....	280,000	268,000	233,000	6.0	5.8	6.2
Northeast:						
New England.....	45,620	47,364	340,034	3.6	3.8	33.3
Middle Atlantic.....	133,479	130,951	106,457	3.6	3.5	2.9
Midwest: ²						
East North Central ³	189,253	192,889	185,708	4.5	4.7	4.5
West North Central.....	74,148	74,642	64,086	4.2	4.3	3.8
South:						
South Atlantic.....	205,944	206,175	159,874	5.2	5.3	4.7
East South Central.....	385,072	384,966	70,505	35.7	35.7	5.2
West South Central ³	152,319	152,701	115,935	*	5.9	*
West:						
Mountain.....	86,009	87,886	66,867	6.9	7.1	7.0
Pacific.....	194,360	179,709	165,722	5.7	5.3	5.9
New England:						
Maine.....	5,809	5,955	4,876	5.0	5.2	4.6
New Hampshire.....	4,949	4,805	4,051	5.1	5.0	5.0
Vermont.....	2,334	2,575	31,623	4.4	4.9	33.4
Massachusetts.....	17,123	18,477	16,116	3.0	3.2	2.8
Rhode Island.....	3,642	3,525	2,522	3.8	3.7	2.6
Connecticut.....	11,763	12,027	10,846	3.7	3.8	3.5
Middle Atlantic:						
New York.....	64,634	64,160	54,015	3.6	3.6	3.0
New Jersey.....	28,470	26,641	19,870	3.8	3.6	2.7
Pennsylvania.....	40,375	40,150	32,572	3.4	3.4	2.7
East North Central:						
Ohio.....	353,433	354,111	49,239	35.0	35.0	4.6
Indiana ⁴	32,701	33,898	333,908	5.9	6.2	36.3
Illinois.....	48,910	50,388	48,361	4.2	4.4	4.3
Michigan.....	37,584	37,991	41,850	4.1	4.2	4.6
Wisconsin.....	16,625	16,501	12,350	3.5	3.5	2.7
West North Central:						
Minnesota.....	14,758	14,817	12,237	3.5	3.6	3.1
Iowa.....	10,509	10,588	9,480	3.6	3.6	3.3
Missouri.....	24,826	25,904	22,088	5.0	5.2	4.6
North Dakota.....	2,249	2,336	1,588	3.3	3.4	2.5
South Dakota.....	2,498	2,556	2,016	3.5	3.7	3.0
Nebraska.....	6,403	6,234	5,193	4.0	3.9	3.4
Kansas.....	12,905	12,207	11,484	5.3	5.0	5.1
South Atlantic:						
Delaware.....	2,907	3,060	2,354	4.7	5.0	4.0
Maryland.....	16,134	16,273	15,070	3.7	3.8	3.6
District of Columbia.....	3,057	3,051	3,176	4.9	4.9	4.4
Virginia.....	24,705	25,482	16,704	4.4	4.6	3.4
West Virginia.....	9,629	10,113	7,176	4.9	5.2	4.0
North Carolina.....	29,601	30,099	20,049	4.8	5.0	3.7
South Carolina.....	13,674	13,601	8,816	4.1	4.2	3.1
Georgia.....	30,905	33,270	26,918	5.3	5.8	5.4
Florida.....	75,332	71,226	59,611	6.9	6.6	7.2
East South Central:						
Kentucky.....	317,110	316,985	13,791	34.6	34.6	4.0
Tennessee.....	29,638	29,355	23,725	6.3	6.3	5.6
Alabama.....	25,413	25,190	21,123	6.4	6.4	5.8
Mississippi.....	312,911	13,436	11,866	35.0	5.2	5.0

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Divorces and divorce rates: United States, each region, division, and State, 1974, 1983, and 1984—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 tables 4 and 5. Rates per 1,000 population in each area estimated as of July 1]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1984	1983	1974	1984	1983	1974
West South Central:						
Arkansas ³	15,337	15,681	15,840	6.5	6.7	7.5
Louisiana ³	13,894	16,204	7,812	*	3.6	*
Oklahoma.....	24,130	23,755	⁴ 22,521	7.3	7.2	⁴ 8.2
Texas.....	98,958	97,061	69,762	6.2	6.2	5.7
Mountain:						
Montana.....	4,355	4,561	3,940	5.3	5.6	5.3
Idaho.....	6,210	6,178	4,808	6.2	6.3	6.0
Wyoming.....	3,705	3,978	2,523	7.3	7.7	6.9
Colorado.....	18,430	19,409	15,082	5.8	6.2	5.9
New Mexico.....	⁵ 11,216	11,922	7,863	⁵ 7.9	8.5	7.0
Arizona.....	20,009	19,875	16,936	6.6	6.7	7.6
Utah.....	8,262	8,525	5,670	5.0	5.3	4.7
Nevada.....	13,822	13,438	10,045	15.2	15.0	16.8
Pacific:						
Washington.....	27,138	27,503	23,909	6.2	6.4	6.7
Oregon.....	15,631	16,173	13,538	5.8	6.1	5.9
California.....	⁶ 142,972	127,532	121,714	⁶ 5.6	5.1	5.7
Alaska.....	3,850	3,918	2,450	7.7	8.1	7.1
Hawaii.....	4,769	4,583	4,111	4.6	4.5	4.7

¹Figure includes estimate.
²Formerly the North Central Region.
³Data are incomplete.
⁴Some counties reported divorce petitions filed rather than decrees granted.
⁵Divorce petitions filed rather than decrees granted.
⁶Data 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, 1950–84

[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
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	1.31	11.9	1951.....	304,000	0.80	6.1
1968.....	784,000	1.34	11.1	1950.....	299,000	0.78	6.3
1967.....	701,000	1.34	9.9				

Table 4. Number of divorces and annulments, 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: Divorce-registration area, 1984

[Refers to children under 18 years of age. Estimated from frequencies based on sample]

<i>Area</i>	<i>All divorces and annulments</i>	<i>Estimated number of children involved</i>	<i>Average number of children per decree</i>	<i>Rate per 1,000 children under 18 years of age</i>
Divorce-registration area	567,783	524,969	0.92	15.3
Alabama.....	25,510	23,185	0.91	20.9
Alaska.....	3,897	3,757	0.96	23.2
Connecticut.....	11,708	10,658	0.91	14.3
Delaware.....	2,960	2,820	0.95	18.2
Georgia.....	33,320	26,959	0.81	16.5
Hawaii.....	4,764	4,580	0.96	16.0
Idaho ¹	6,148	5,918	0.96	18.4
Illinois.....	48,880	46,084	0.94	14.9
Iowa.....	10,508	11,759	1.12	15.0
Kansas.....	12,945	12,472	0.96	19.1
Kentucky.....	17,135	14,856	0.87	14.4
Maryland.....	16,110	12,765	0.79	11.8
Massachusetts.....	16,760	17,133	1.02	12.6
Michigan.....	37,620	37,610	1.00	15.1
Missouri.....	24,860	22,698	0.91	17.3
Montana.....	4,367	4,352	1.00	18.4
Nebraska.....	6,403	7,411	1.16	16.7
New Hampshire.....	4,942	5,030	1.02	20.0
New York.....	64,607	53,996	0.84	12.3
Ohio.....	53,300	50,359	0.94	17.5
Oregon.....	15,625	15,100	0.97	21.3
Pennsylvania.....	40,330	38,361	0.95	13.2
Rhode Island.....	3,642	3,882	1.07	17.2
South Carolina.....	13,689	12,190	0.89	13.1
South Dakota.....	2,498	2,725	1.09	13.2
Tennessee.....	29,670	23,579	0.79	18.9
Utah.....	8,212	9,565	1.16	15.3
Vermont.....	2,354	2,865	1.22	20.6
Virginia.....	24,683	19,834	0.80	13.9
Wisconsin.....	16,635	18,534	1.11	14.5
Wyoming.....	3,701	3,932	1.06	24.6

¹This State reports number of children affected by decree.

Table 5. 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, 1984

[Based on sample data]

Area	All divorces and annulments	Number of children under 18 years involved						
		Total	None	1	2	3	4	5 or more
Divorce-registration area	567,783	100.0	46.5	25.5	19.9	6.1	1.5	0.5
Alabama	25,510	100.0	46.3	26.8	19.2	5.5	1.5	0.7
Alaska	3,897	100.0	47.8	24.1	20.2	5.5	1.5	1.0
Connecticut	11,708	100.0	46.3	25.3	21.4	5.4	1.3	0.3
Delaware	2,960	100.0	44.9	25.8	21.9	5.7	1.3	0.3
Georgia	33,320	100.0	51.3	24.5	18.2	4.4	1.1	0.5
Hawaii	4,764	100.0	46.1	24.6	19.6	6.9	2.0	0.8
Idaho ¹	6,148	100.0	46.5	23.8	20.2	6.5	2.2	0.8
Illinois	48,880	100.0	46.0	25.4	19.6	6.6	1.8	0.6
Iowa	10,508	100.0	39.9	25.6	24.1	7.9	1.9	0.6
Kansas	12,945	100.0	44.4	25.9	21.2	6.8	1.4	0.3
Kentucky	17,135	100.0	47.3	27.2	18.4	5.5	1.3	0.3
Maryland	16,110	100.0	51.0	26.0	17.6	4.4	0.7	0.3
Massachusetts	16,760	100.0	42.0	25.8	22.7	7.3	1.7	0.5
Michigan	37,620	100.0	44.7	23.4	22.1	7.3	2.0	0.5
Missouri	24,860	100.0	46.5	26.2	19.5	6.1	1.3	0.4
Montana	4,367	100.0	45.2	24.1	21.2	7.0	2.0	0.6
Nebraska	6,403	100.0	37.0	26.6	24.0	9.5	2.0	0.9
New Hampshire	4,942	100.0	41.2	27.0	23.4	6.7	1.3	0.4
New York	64,607	100.0	51.5	23.1	17.6	5.8	1.4	0.5
Ohio	53,300	100.0	45.2	26.4	20.2	6.1	1.7	0.4
Oregon	15,625	100.0	44.3	25.6	22.7	5.7	1.5	0.1
Pennsylvania	40,330	100.0	44.1	27.0	20.4	6.8	1.4	0.3
Rhode Island	3,642	100.0	42.5	25.7	22.4	7.0	1.7	0.7
South Carolina	13,689	100.0	46.1	27.6	19.1	5.7	1.1	0.3
South Dakota	2,498	100.0	39.7	26.1	23.8	8.0	1.8	0.4
Tennessee	29,670	100.0	51.8	25.4	17.0	4.3	1.1	0.4
Utah	8,212	100.0	39.8	24.7	20.4	9.4	3.4	2.3
Vermont	2,354	100.0	38.3	26.3	25.5	7.6	1.9	0.5
Virginia	24,683	100.0	49.7	27.2	17.5	4.5	0.9	0.2
Wisconsin	16,635	100.0	38.3	25.6	25.4	8.1	1.9	0.6
Wyoming	3,701	100.0	43.2	23.9	22.4	8.0	1.8	0.7

¹This State reports number of children affected by decree.

Table 6. Divorces and divorce rates by age of men and women at time of decree: Divorce-registration area, 1983 and 1984

[Based on sample data. For sampling errors and a description of the divorce-registration area, see Technical notes. Rates per 1,000 married population in specified group estimated as of July 1]

Age at time of decree	Men				Women			
	Number		Rate ¹		Number		Rate ¹	
	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983
All ages	567,783	572,949	19.2	19.3	567,783	572,949	18.8	18.9
15-19 years ²	2,727	2,846	42.9	43.3	11,179	12,554	45.5	48.1
20-24 years	53,524	55,347	48.2	45.2	86,891	87,444	44.4	43.3
25-29 years	105,819	107,728	37.6	40.0	116,531	118,878	35.0	35.7
30-34 years	104,709	106,047	31.7	32.4	99,034	98,023	28.1	27.7
35-39 years	86,748	83,668	27.1	27.3	77,501	75,291	23.5	23.9
40-44 years	59,895	57,911	22.0	21.5	49,570	47,782	18.5	18.2
45-49 years	37,591	36,529	16.1	15.9	27,450	27,715	11.8	12.1
50-54 years	23,707	24,141	10.7	10.7	16,121	16,108	7.4	7.3
55-59 years	15,089	14,818	6.4	6.2	9,734	9,353	4.3	4.1
60-64 years	8,463	8,430	4.0	3.9	5,164	5,154	2.7	2.8
65 years and over	7,845	7,797	1.9	2.0	4,221	4,404	1.4	1.5
Not stated	61,666	67,687	...	...	64,387	70,243	...	...

¹Rates exclude data for Michigan, Ohio, and South Dakota. Prior to calculation of rates, figures for age not stated were distributed.

²Includes divorces of persons under 15 years of age.

Table 7. Percent distribution of divorces and annulments by age of husband and wife at time of decree, and median and mean ages: Divorce-registration area, 1974-84

[Based on sample data]

Age of husband and wife at time of decree	1984	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974
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	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1
20-24 years	10.6	11.0	11.7	12.5	13.5	13.9	14.8	14.7	15.1	15.2	15.7
25-29 years	20.9	21.3	22.0	22.8	23.4	23.8	24.3	24.0	24.8	25.1	24.2
30-34 years	20.7	21.0	21.3	22.1	21.4	20.8	20.2	19.8	18.6	18.6	18.2
35-39 years	17.1	16.6	16.3	15.1	14.6	14.2	13.8	13.4	12.9	12.5	12.4
40-44 years	11.8	11.5	10.7	10.0	9.8	9.7	9.3	9.4	9.5	9.3	9.6
45-49 years	7.4	7.2	6.9	6.7	6.5	6.7	6.6	6.9	7.2	7.3	7.5
50-54 years	4.7	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.8	4.9	5.1	5.2
55-59 years	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.8
60-64 years	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7
65 years and over	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6
	Age in years ¹										
Median age	34.3	34.0	33.6	33.1	32.7	32.5	32.0	32.4	32.3	32.2	32.2
Mean age	36.2	36.1	35.7	35.4	35.1	35.0	34.8	35.1	35.1	35.0	35.1
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	2.2	2.5	2.7	2.9	3.4	3.6	4.0	3.8	4.1	4.4	4.6
20-24 years	17.3	17.4	18.6	19.5	20.8	21.2	22.7	22.3	22.4	22.5	23.0
25-29 years	23.1	23.6	24.1	24.8	24.6	24.8	24.6	24.5	25.1	25.2	24.3
30-34 years	19.7	19.5	19.9	20.2	19.4	18.7	17.9	17.9	16.7	16.3	16.1
35-39 years	15.4	15.0	14.2	13.1	12.8	12.3	11.8	11.3	11.2	10.9	10.7
40-44 years	9.8	9.5	8.8	8.2	7.7	7.9	7.5	7.7	7.9	7.6	7.9
45-49 years	5.5	5.5	5.1	4.9	4.8	5.0	5.0	5.3	5.6	5.7	5.9
50-54 years	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.6
55-59 years	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.7	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.0
60-64 years	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0
65 years and over	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
	Age in years ¹										
Median age	31.7	31.5	31.1	30.6	30.3	30.1	29.7	29.9	29.7	29.5	29.5
Mean age	33.6	33.5	33.1	32.7	32.4	32.3	32.1	32.4	32.3	32.3	32.3

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

Table 8. Percent distribution of divorces and annulments by age of husband and wife at time of marriage, and median and mean ages: Divorce-registration area, 1974-84

[Based on sample data]

<i>Age of husband and wife at time of marriage</i>	1984	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974
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	14.9	15.4	16.1	17.0	18.0	18.4	19.3	18.6	18.9	19.1	19.5
20-24 years	41.9	42.5	43.0	44.0	44.0	44.3	44.7	44.5	44.4	44.8	44.6
25-29 years	20.1	19.7	19.3	18.7	18.4	18.0	17.5	17.4	17.3	17.1	16.7
30-34 years	9.7	9.3	9.0	8.6	8.1	7.9	7.4	7.6	7.4	7.3	7.3
35-39 years	5.4	5.1	5.0	4.6	4.5	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.2
40-44 years	3.1	3.2	3.0	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.9
45 years and over	4.9	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.8
	Age in years ¹										
Median age	24.0	23.8	23.7	23.4	23.3	23.2	23.0	23.1	23.1	23.0	23.0
Mean age	26.7	26.6	26.4	26.1	25.9	25.8	25.7	25.9	25.9	25.8	25.9
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	34.0	35.1	36.6	38.3	39.9	41.0	42.8	42.2	42.5	43.3	43.8
20-24 years	36.4	36.3	36.2	35.9	35.5	35.1	34.2	34.0	33.8	33.7	33.3
25-29 years	13.8	13.3	12.7	12.1	11.4	11.0	10.5	10.7	10.3	9.9	9.9
30-34 years	6.8	6.7	6.2	5.8	5.6	5.4	5.0	5.2	5.2	4.8	4.8
35-39 years	4.0	3.7	3.6	3.2	3.1	3.1	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.0	2.9
40-44 years	2.1	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.1
45 years and over	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.7	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.3
	Age in years ¹										
Median age	21.7	21.5	21.3	21.1	20.9	20.9	20.7	20.7	20.7	20.6	20.6
Mean age	24.1	24.0	23.8	23.5	23.3	23.2	23.1	23.3	23.3	23.2	23.2

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

Table 9. Mean ages of divorced husband and wife at time of marriage and at time of decree: Divorce-registration area and each registration State, 1984

[Based on sample data]

Area	Mean age of husband		Mean age of wife	
	At decree	At marriage	At decree	At marriage
Divorce-registration area	36.2	26.7	33.6	24.1
Alabama.....	35.3	27.5	32.2	24.5
Alaska.....	35.2	27.8	32.2	24.9
Connecticut.....	37.6	26.8	35.1	24.2
Delaware.....	36.3	26.4	33.9	24.0
Georgia.....	35.1	26.9	32.4	24.3
Hawaii.....	35.9	27.5	33.1	24.8
Idaho.....	35.5	28.3	32.6	25.4
Illinois.....	36.1	26.9	33.4	24.2
Iowa.....	35.1	25.8	32.7	23.4
Kansas.....	34.9	27.1	32.1	24.4
Kentucky.....	35.1	26.6	32.3	23.9
Maryland.....	37.2	26.2	34.8	23.7
Massachusetts.....	37.9	26.0	35.3	23.5
Michigan.....	36.5	26.8	34.0	24.3
Missouri.....	35.6	27.0	33.0	24.4
Montana.....	36.3	28.0	33.3	25.0
Nebraska.....	35.5	26.0	33.0	23.5
New Hampshire.....	35.7	26.3	33.1	23.8
New York.....	37.8	27.2	35.2	24.7
Ohio.....	35.5	26.5	33.1	24.1
Oregon.....	37.2	28.2	34.5	25.5
Pennsylvania.....	37.0	25.8	34.3	23.2
Rhode Island.....	37.2	26.1	34.6	23.6
South Carolina.....	35.6	25.7	33.0	23.2
South Dakota.....	34.5	25.8	31.8	23.3
Tennessee.....	35.3	26.9	32.6	24.3
Texas.....	34.8	27.0	32.2	24.3
Vermont.....	36.9	26.2	34.3	23.7
Virginia.....	36.5	26.0	34.0	23.5
Wisconsin.....	36.2	25.8	33.6	23.3
Wyoming.....	34.4	27.2	31.8	24.5

Table 10. Mean and median duration of marriage to decree: Divorce-registration area, 1970-84

[Based on sample data]

Year	Mean	Median	Year	Mean	Median
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
1977.....	9.2	6.6			

Table 11. Percent distribution of divorces and annulments by duration of marriage to decree, and median and mean duration of marriage to decree: Divorce-registration area, 1984

[Based on sample data]

Area	Total	Percent distribution						Years ¹	
		Under 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	4.2	33.6	25.7	15.4	9.5	11.6	6.9	9.5
Alabama	100.0	10.6	38.3	21.6	12.9	7.9	8.6	5.2	8.0
Alaska	100.0	6.6	42.7	25.2	12.3	6.4	6.8	5.1	7.4
Connecticut	100.0	1.9	29.5	24.9	16.4	12.4	15.0	8.4	10.9
Delaware	100.0	2.3	31.5	26.9	16.1	11.4	11.7	7.6	10.0
Georgia	100.0	7.8	39.5	23.3	12.4	8.1	9.0	5.4	8.2
Hawaii	100.0	3.9	38.5	28.0	14.5	7.1	8.1	6.0	8.4
Idaho	100.0	7.7	41.7	23.6	12.0	7.4	7.8	5.1	7.7
Illinois	100.0	4.8	35.2	25.1	14.8	8.8	11.2	6.6	9.2
Iowa	100.0	3.3	34.9	26.1	15.6	9.1	11.1	6.8	9.4
Kansas	100.0	7.2	42.4	22.6	12.5	6.9	8.4	5.1	7.8
Kentucky	100.0	7.5	36.6	24.9	13.9	7.4	9.7	5.9	8.5
Maryland	100.0	0.5	23.6	29.3	18.8	12.3	15.5	9.3	11.6
Massachusetts	100.0	0.4	22.1	28.1	20.3	12.4	16.8	9.9	11.9
Michigan	100.0	3.4	31.3	26.8	16.3	9.8	12.4	7.4	10.0
Missouri	100.0	5.8	38.4	24.8	13.6	7.8	9.7	5.8	8.6
Montana	100.0	7.6	39.2	23.1	13.7	7.2	9.3	5.5	8.3
Nebraska	100.0	3.1	35.3	26.3	14.7	8.8	11.8	6.8	9.5
New Hampshire	100.0	1.9	32.8	27.4	15.9	9.9	12.0	7.3	9.8
New York	100.0	2.2	30.4	25.4	17.1	10.6	14.3	8.1	10.6
Ohio	100.0	4.9	36.8	25.3	14.9	8.7	9.3	6.2	8.7
Oregon	100.0	4.2	34.8	26.9	15.8	8.5	9.8	6.7	9.1
Pennsylvania	100.0	1.5	25.3	28.5	17.5	12.1	15.2	9.0	11.2
Rhode Island	100.0	1.1	28.0	27.6	16.1	11.6	15.6	8.4	11.1
South Carolina	100.0	2.1	32.5	27.2	16.3	10.4	11.5	7.4	9.9
South Dakota	100.0	4.3	38.0	25.0	13.8	8.0	11.0	6.2	9.0
Tennessee	100.0	8.2	39.1	22.4	12.2	8.2	10.0	5.4	8.3
Utah	100.0	7.0	40.3	25.4	12.0	6.9	8.4	5.4	7.9
Vermont	100.0	0.5	29.4	26.9	18.5	11.2	13.5	8.5	10.0
Virginia	100.0	0.8	29.2	28.7	17.3	10.4	13.5	8.1	10.0
Wisconsin	100.0	1.6	29.8	27.5	17.1	10.9	13.1	7.8	10.4
Wyoming	100.0	7.0	42.9	25.3	12.9	6.3	5.6	5.0	7.3

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.

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 3-11 come from a probability sample of divorce records from the 31 States that participated in the DRA in 1984. In 1973-77, 29 States participated in the DRA; in 1978, 28 States participated; in 1979-80, 30 States participated; and in 1981-84, 31 States participated. About 48 percent of the divorces in the United States took place in DRA States in 1984.

Divorce sample

The probability sample of divorce records for 1984 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 1974, 1983, and 1984, and for each DRA State for 1984.

Sampling error of estimated percent: Divorce-registration area, 1974, 1983, and 1984, and each registration State, 1984

[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 1984 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				
1984 (31 States)	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
1983 (31 States)	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2
1974 (29 States)	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2
Registration States, 1984				
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	0.6	0.6
Illinois . . . . .	...	...	...	...
Iowa	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.5
Kansas	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.9
Kentucky	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Maryland	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Massachusetts	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
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	0.8	0.9
Utah	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.6
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 1984 are based on populations estimated as of July 1, 1984.^{1,2} 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.

¹U.S. Bureau of the Census: State population estimates, by age and components of change, 1980 to 1984. *Current Population Reports*. Series P-25, No. 970. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, June 1985.

²Unpublished estimates by marital status prepared by the U.S. Bureau of the Census consistent with State population estimates, by age and components of change, 1980 to 1984. *Current Population Reports*. Series P-25, No. 970. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, June 1985.

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

This report represents summary tabulations from the final divorce statistics for 1984. More detailed tabulations for 1984 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.

Suggested citation

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