

Rec'd 7/31/81

nchs MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Final Data from the National Center for Health Statistics

Vol. 30, No. 4, Supplement • July 31, 1981

Advance Report of Final Marriage Statistics, 1979

In 1979 there were 2,331,337 marriages in the United States. This was an increase of almost 50,000 marriages, or 2 percent, over 1978, the fourth consecutive increase in the annual total and a new record for the Nation. As the decade ended, the annual total of marriages was 8 percent higher than it had been in 1970. The upward trend was reversed only in 1974 and 1975 (table 1). Provisional data for 1980 indicate an increase over 1979.

The marriage rate for 1979 was 10.6 per 1,000 population, up 1 percent over the rate for 1978, and

the same as it was at the beginning of the decade in 1970 and 1971. Between 1971 and 1979, however, the rate rose and peaked at 11.0 in 1972, declined for 3 years (1973-75), stabilized through 1977, and increased in 1978 and 1979 (figure 1).

In contrast to the small increase between 1978 and 1979 in the rate for the total population, the rate per 1,000 unmarried women 15 years of age and over declined. This rate dropped 17 percent between 1970 and 1979, from 76.5 to 63.6. The two rates did not parallel one another during the decade because the

Table 1. Marriages and marriage rates: United States, 1958-79

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

Year	Number	Rate per 1,000 ¹ —		
		Total population	Unmarried women 15 years and over	Unmarried women 15-44 years
1979 ²	2,331,337	10.6	63.6	107.9
1978 ²	2,282,272	10.5	64.1	109.1
1977	2,178,367	10.1	63.6	109.8
1976	2,154,807	10.0	65.2	113.4
1975	2,152,662	10.1	66.9	118.5
1974	2,229,667	10.5	72.0	128.4
1973	2,284,108	10.9	76.0	137.3
1972	2,282,154	11.0	77.9	141.3
1971	2,190,481	10.6	76.2	138.9
1970	2,158,802	10.6	76.5	140.2
1969	2,145,000	10.6	80.0	149.1
1968	2,069,000	10.4	79.1	147.2
1967	1,927,000	9.7	76.4	145.2
1966	1,857,000	9.5	75.6	145.1
1965	1,800,000	9.3	75.0	144.3
1964	1,725,000	9.0	74.6	146.2
1963	1,654,000	8.8	73.4	143.3
1962	1,577,000	8.5	71.2	138.4
1961	1,548,000	8.5	72.2	145.4
1960	1,523,000	8.5	73.5	148.0
1959	1,494,000	8.5	73.6	149.8
1958	1,451,000	8.4	72.0	146.3

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

²Beginning with 1978, data include nonlicensed marriages registered in California; see Technical notes.

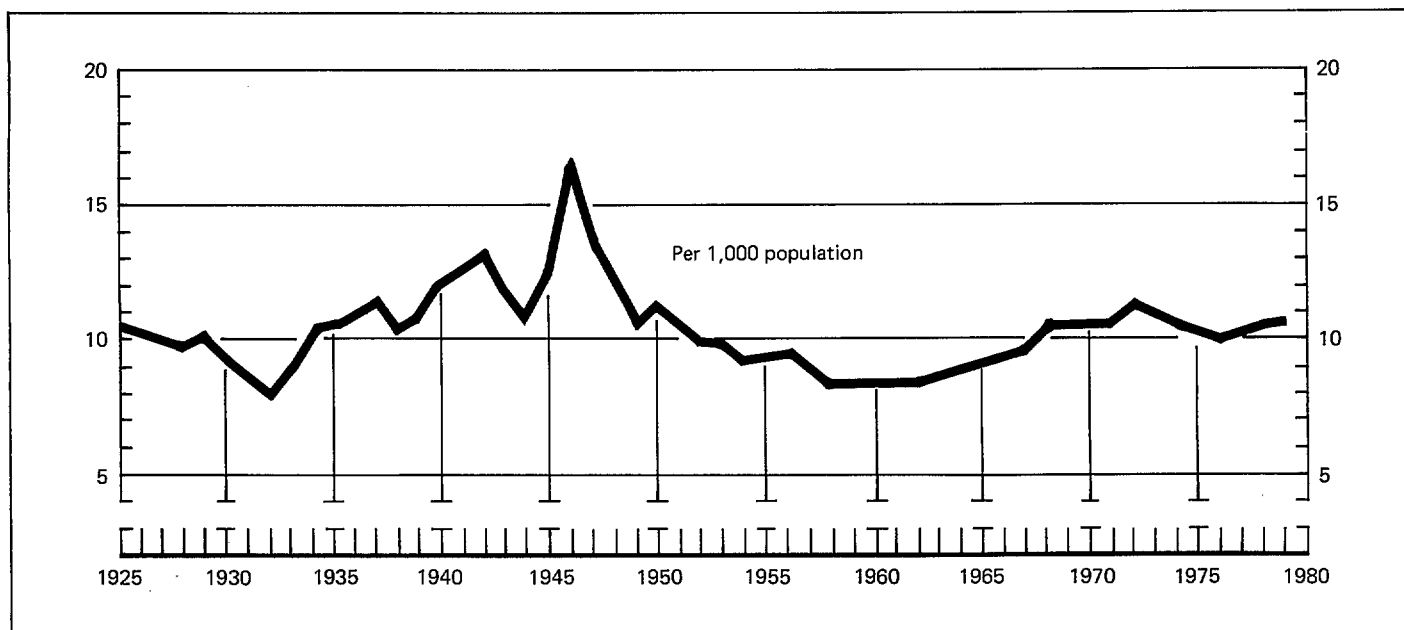


Figure 1. Marriage rate: United States, 1925-79

population of marriageable women increased faster than the total population. The marriage rate per 1,000 unmarried women 15-44 years of age declined as well, dropping 23 percent from 140.2 in 1970 to 107.9 in 1979.

An increase in the number of marriages was recorded for each geographic region as well as for the entire Nation. The greatest numerical increase was in the South Region, and the greatest percent increase was in the Northeast Region.

Rates of marriage usually vary from one region of the country to another. For example, in 1979 the marriage rate for the Northeast Region (8.1 per 1,000 population) was only about two-thirds the level for the South (12.0) and West (12.5), while the rate for the North Central Region was intermediate (9.7). The 1970 rates were very similar to those in 1979.

Four out of five States recorded greater numbers of marriages in 1979 than in 1978, but only three out of five States recorded increased rates based on their total population (table 2). In some States the numerical increases just kept pace with population growth, and the rates remained stable.

Since marriage rates are affected by the relative age distribution of the unmarried populations, it is desirable to have rates that relate marriages to the specific subgroups of the population where they can occur, when such population data are available. Such rates are calculated for the group of States that comprise the marriage-registration area (MRA). In 1979 the MRA included 42 States and the District of Columbia. These States collect data on salient characteristics of brides and grooms such as age at marriage and previous marital status. The rates are shown in

table 3 along with the distribution of marriages in the MRA by sex, previous marital status, and age.

As shown in the first column of table 3, in 1979 almost two-thirds of the 1.8 million brides in the MRA were marrying for the first time, almost one-fourth had been divorced, and less than 5 percent had been widowed. Fewer grooms than brides were previously single and more were previously divorced.

As would be expected from the rising divorce rates during the 1970's, the proportion of brides who were remarrying after divorce increased between 1970 and 1979, from 17 to 25 percent, and the proportion of grooms increased, from 18 to 27 percent.

Marriage rates for the MRA are also shown in table 3. In 1979 the marriage rate for women was 53.6 per 1,000 unmarried women 14 years of age and over compared with 53.3 in 1978. The comparable rate for men was 65.1 in 1979 and 64.9 in 1978. While these increases are negligible, they are significant in reversing a downward trend of 6 years duration during which both rates fell approximately 20 percent.

As in previous years, divorced persons married at higher rates than single or widowed persons. The marriage rate was higher for never-married women than for never-married men, but the opposite was true, and more decidedly so, for the widowed and divorced. The marriage rate for widowed men was nearly 5 times the rate for widowed women.

Most age specific rates continued the downward trend that typified the 1970's. The only age specific rates that rose very much between 1978 and 1979 were those for some age groups of widowed and divorced men.

(Continued on page 5)

Table 2. Marriages and marriage rates: United States, each region, division, and State, 1977-79

[By place of occurrence. Data are counts of marriages performed except as noted. Rates per 1,000 population in each area, estimated as of July 1]

Region, division, and State	Number			Rate			Region, division, and State	Number			Rate		
	1979	1978	1977	1979	1978	1977		1979	1978	1977	1979	1978	1977
United States	12,331,337	22,282,272	2,178,367	110.6	210.5	10.1	West North Central:						
Northeast	394,912	382,201	372,666	8.1	7.8	7.6	Minnesota	⁴ 36,808	33,480	33,038	49.1	8.3	8.3
North Central	568,363	562,612	552,000	9.7	9.7	9.5	Iowa	27,925	28,030	26,419	9.6	9.6	9.2
South	855,559	832,840	805,281	12.0	11.8	11.5	Missouri	52,952	52,878	52,100	10.9	10.9	10.9
West	¹ 512,503	² 504,619	448,420	¹ 12.5	² 12.5	11.4	North Dakota	6,021	5,651	5,668	9.2	8.7	8.7
Northeast:							South Dakota	8,978	10,638	10,359	13.0	15.4	15.0
New England	104,068	99,742	97,317	8.5	8.1	7.9	Nebraska	14,074	13,711	13,387	8.9	8.7	8.6
Middle Atlantic	290,844	282,459	275,349	7.9	7.7	7.4	Kansas	24,774	23,975	23,673	10.5	10.2	10.2
North Central:							South Atlantic:						
East North Central	396,831	394,249	387,356	9.6	9.6	9.4	Delaware	4,362	4,322	3,993	7.5	7.4	6.9
West North Central	171,532	168,363	164,644	10.0	9.9	9.8	Maryland	45,874	45,029	45,109	11.1	10.9	10.9
South:							District of Columbia	4,874	4,624	4,640	7.4	6.9	6.7
South Atlantic	401,888	390,527	380,790	11.5	11.3	11.1	Virginia	58,678	58,967	57,778	11.3	11.4	11.3
East South Central	169,207	³ 165,830	³ 160,109	12.0	³ 11.9	³ 11.6	West Virginia	17,738	17,275	17,484	9.4	9.3	9.4
West South Central	284,464	276,483	264,382	12.7	12.5	12.2	North Carolina	45,064	43,852	43,490	8.0	7.9	7.9
West:							South Carolina	53,505	52,960	51,314	18.2	18.2	17.8
Mountain	226,988	234,451	219,457	21.3	22.6	21.9	Georgia	68,548	68,171	67,388	13.4	13.4	13.3
Pacific	¹ 285,515	² 270,168	228,963	¹ 9.4	² 9.0	7.8	Florida	103,245	95,327	89,594	11.7	11.0	10.6
New England:							East South Central:						
Maine	11,918	11,658	11,446	10.9	10.7	10.5	Kentucky	34,031	³ 33,301	³ 32,245	9.6	³ 9.5	³ 9.3
New Hampshire	9,074	9,120	8,902	10.2	10.5	10.5	Tennessee	59,173	57,529	55,327	13.5	13.3	12.9
Vermont	5,175	4,804	4,774	10.5	9.9	9.9	Alabama	48,743	47,720	45,694	12.9	12.8	12.4
Massachusetts	45,104	42,882	41,947	7.8	7.4	7.3	Mississippi	27,260	27,280	26,843	11.2	11.3	11.2
Rhode Island	7,366	7,277	7,114	7.9	7.8	7.6	West South Central:						
Connecticut	25,431	24,001	23,134	8.2	7.7	7.4	Arkansas	25,908	25,096	24,028	11.9	11.6	11.2
Middle Atlantic:							Louisiana	41,347	39,877	38,645	10.3	10.0	9.9
New York	142,427	136,784	133,830	8.1	7.7	7.5	Oklahoma	44,452	43,683	42,133	15.4	15.4	15.0
New Jersey	54,740	52,993	50,677	7.5	7.2	6.9	Texas	172,757	167,827	159,576	12.9	12.9	12.4
Pennsylvania	93,677	92,682	90,842	8.0	7.9	7.7	Mountain:						
East North Central:							Montana	8,196	8,136	7,547	10.4	10.4	9.9
Ohio	99,752	103,754	99,352	9.3	9.7	9.3	Idaho	13,429	13,570	13,691	14.8	15.4	16.0
Indiana	59,587	58,050	56,424	11.0	10.8	10.6	Wyoming	6,459	6,298	6,012	14.4	14.8	14.8
Illinois	108,482	105,923	108,100	9.7	9.4	9.6	Colorado	32,831	31,129	30,063	11.8	11.5	11.5
Michigan	89,450	88,333	86,088	9.7	9.6	9.4	New Mexico ⁵	16,309	16,582	16,385	13.1	13.6	13.8
Wisconsin	39,560	38,189	37,392	8.4	8.2	8.0	Arizona	29,603	27,725	26,955	12.1	11.7	11.7
							Utah	16,699	16,365	15,098	12.2	12.4	11.9
							Nevada	103,462	114,646	103,706	147.4	172.1	163.8
							Pacific:						
							Washington	47,086	45,210	43,835	12.0	11.9	12.0
							Oregon	22,063	21,055	20,303	8.7	8.6	8.5
							California	¹ 199,698	² 188,056	149,416	¹ 8.8	² 8.4	6.8
							Alaska	4,990	5,111	5,143	12.3	12.4	12.6
							Hawaii	11,678	10,736	10,266	12.8	11.9	11.5

¹Figure includes 41,961 nonlicensed marriages registered in California; see Technical notes.²Figure includes 37,462 nonlicensed marriages registered in California; see Technical notes.³Data are incomplete.⁴Data are estimated.⁵Data include marriage licenses issued for some counties.

Table 3. Marriages and marriage rates by age and previous marital status of women and men: Marriage-registration area,¹ 1978-79

[By place of occurrence. Based on sample data. Rates per 1,000 population in specified group, estimated as of July 1 of each year. Figures for age not stated are distributed]

Age and previous marital status	Women				Men			
	Number ²		Rate ³		Number ²		Rate ³	
	1979	1978	1979	1978	1979	1978	1979	1978
All marriages								
Total	1,841,415	1,765,945	53.6	53.3	1,841,415	1,765,945	65.1	64.9
14-17 years	113,632	121,570	16.7	17.7	17,531	19,396	2.5	2.7
18-19 years	300,356	303,354	94.8	99.2	151,132	156,480	42.7	45.0
20-24 years	682,600	656,599	134.6	136.0	667,443	659,809	109.0	112.2
25-44 years	624,799	573,537	102.0	102.3	826,898	764,214	129.5	134.5
25-29 years	323,682	298,860	135.5	137.0	423,230	390,797	142.6	146.2
30-34 years	161,010	145,218	102.5	103.0	215,779	195,940	129.0	136.9
35-44 years	140,107	129,459	64.7	64.2	187,889	177,477	107.8	112.6
45-64 years	98,266	95,546	19.0	19.1	141,293	136,950	51.4	50.6
65 years and over	21,762	15,339	2.7	2.0	37,118	29,096	16.2	13.2
First marriages								
Total	1,214,321	1,174,259	62.1	62.1	1,183,515	1,143,644	52.0	51.9
14-17 years	110,056	117,218	16.3	17.3	17,208	18,999	2.4	2.7
18-19 years	282,932	284,399	91.7	95.6	145,548	150,454	41.9	44.3
20-24 years	572,135	547,522	121.9	123.0	601,888	592,417	102.4	105.2
25-44 years	240,381	216,259	76.8	77.1	403,898	367,491	89.5	91.1
25-29 years	176,287	159,564	104.3	106.7	288,176	262,307	115.5	118.5
30-34 years	44,061	38,827	60.1	60.0	82,462	73,166	74.2	76.8
35-44 years	20,033	17,868	28.4	27.0	33,260	32,018	36.8	37.0
45-64 years	7,982	8,025	7.8	7.9	13,247	12,859	10.8	10.3
65 years and over	835	836	0.9	1.0	1,726	1,424	3.0	2.5
Remarriages								
Total	581,508	547,979	40.8	40.0	613,831	580,568	120.2	121.8
14-19 years	9,556	10,484	312.6	321.5	1,617	1,267	334.5	336.3
20-24 years	90,788	91,112			46,212	48,508		
25-44 years	371,756	346,219	127.5	126.8	405,219	381,785	226.6	242.4
25-29 years	139,953	133,067	210.1	202.5	124,438	119,666	290.1	284.9
30-34 years	114,107	103,888	139.3	139.3	129,314	119,401	239.5	257.9
35-44 years	117,696	109,264	82.1	82.3	151,467	142,718	185.6	206.5
45-64 years	88,777	85,924	21.7	21.9	126,011	121,877	84.6	85.2
65 years and over	20,631	14,240	3.0	2.1	34,772	27,131	20.6	16.8
Previously widowed ⁴	64,905	58,542	7.7	7.1	59,544	53,039	35.3	32.7
14-24 years	1,728	1,955	52.6	55.3	387	623	157.8	146.1
25-44 years	16,470	16,141			8,607	7,996		
45-64 years	31,420	30,273	13.6	13.6	27,033	26,364	60.6	64.9
65 years and over	15,287	10,173	2.6	1.8	23,517	18,056	19.9	15.6
Previously divorced ⁴	432,494	405,619	104.0	105.0	467,073	440,016	165.6	168.6
14-19 years	7,872	8,763	309.1	313.7	1,267	972	318.1	307.4
20-24 years	74,646	74,047			38,811	39,301		
25-44 years	301,771	278,035	135.2	134.4	338,127	316,145	224.1	236.6
45-64 years	45,503	42,658	35.1	35.6	81,795	78,053	92.8	89.2
65 years and over	2,702	2,116	7.4	6.4	7,073	5,545	23.3	20.8
Not stated if widowed or divorced ⁵	84,109	83,818	...	...	87,214	87,513	...	...
Not stated if previously married⁶								
Total	45,586	43,707	...	...	44,069	41,733	...	...

¹Data exclude 37,462 nonlicensed marriages registered in California in 1978 and 41,961 registered in 1979. Sampling errors of estimates and a description of the MRA appear in the Technical notes.

²Figures for first marriages and remarriages exclude data for Iowa; these data are included in Not stated if previously married.

³Base populations exclude persons under 14 years of age. Rates for all marriages are based on the unmarried population; for first marriages, on the never-married population; and for remarriages, on the widowed and divorced populations. All rates exclude data for Iowa.

⁴Data exclude remarriages in Michigan, Ohio, and South Carolina.

⁵Data include all remarriages in Michigan, Ohio, and South Carolina.

⁶Figures are included in all marriages.

Table 4. Median age of bride and groom by previous marital status: Marriage-registration area,¹ 1963-79

[Based on sample data. For a description of the marriage-registration area, see Technical notes]

Year	Median age of bride					Median age of groom				
	Total	First marriage	Remarriage	Previously divorced ²	Previously widowed ²	Total	First marriage	Remarriage	Previously divorced ²	Previously widowed ²
1979 ³	23.4	21.6	31.9	30.8	55.2	25.8	23.4	35.3	33.9	61.7
1978 ³	23.2	21.4	31.5	30.5	52.6	25.5	23.2	35.1	33.8	59.7
1977 ³	22.9	21.1	31.4	30.2	53.1	25.2	23.0	34.9	33.6	60.1
1976	22.7	21.0	31.7	30.1	53.0	25.0	22.9	35.1	33.7	60.0
1975	22.4	20.8	32.0	30.2	52.4	24.7	22.7	35.5	33.6	59.4
1974	22.0	20.6	32.1	30.0	51.9	24.2	22.5	35.7	33.6	59.2
1973	21.9	20.6	32.3	30.2	52.1	24.1	22.5	36.3	33.9	59.3
1972	21.7	20.5	32.8	30.3	51.4	23.8	22.4	36.5	34.0	59.1
1971	21.7	20.5	32.9	30.2	51.8	23.7	22.5	36.9	34.1	59.1
1970	21.7	20.6	33.3	30.1	51.2	23.6	22.5	37.5	34.5	58.7
1969	21.6	20.6	33.8	30.4	51.3	23.5	22.4	38.2	34.7	59.0
1968	21.5	20.6	33.8	30.7	50.6	23.6	22.4	38.3	35.1	57.9
1967	21.4	20.5	35.0	31.3	50.0	23.8	22.6	39.1	35.5	57.7
1966	21.5	20.3	35.2	31.4	50.2	23.8	22.6	39.2	35.8	57.9
1965	21.4	20.4	35.5	31.7	50.1	23.6	22.5	39.6	36.0	57.8
1964	21.4	20.4	35.6	31.7	50.3	23.6	22.4	39.7	36.4	58.0
1963	21.3	20.3	35.6	31.8	49.7	23.7	22.5	39.8	36.3	58.0

¹Figures exclude nonlicensed marriages registered in California; see Technical notes.²Figures for previously divorced and previously widowed exclude data for Michigan and Ohio for all years, for South Carolina beginning with 1972, and for the District of Columbia for 1970.³Figures for first marriage, remarriage, previously divorced, and previously widowed exclude data for Iowa.

The rate for previously single women 14-17 years of age dropped 6 percent from 1978 to 1979 and 36 percent between 1970 and 1979, from 25.6 to 16.3. The rate for single women 18-19 years of age dropped 4 percent from 1978 to 1979 and 39 percent between 1970 and 1979, from 151.4 to 91.7. As in previous years, women aged 20-24 years had the highest rates for first marriages. These rates slipped 1 percent between 1978 and 1979 but 45 percent between 1970 and 1979, from 220.1 to 121.9. The rate for single women aged 25-29 years dropped 2 percent from 1978 to 1979 and 21 percent between 1970 and 1979, from 132.8 to 104.3; this rate declined less abruptly across the decade than the rates for younger women. Marriage rates in 1979 for single women at ages 30 to 64 years were about the same as in 1978 and about 10 percent lower than in 1970. The age specific rates for single men also continued the downward trends that typified the 1970's.

In 1979 the median age of brides rose for the seventh consecutive year. The median was 23.4 years of age (table 4), 1.7 years higher than it had been at

the start of the decade when it was 21.7. This was due in part to a smaller proportion of first marriages in 1979 than in 1970. The median age at first marriage rose less sharply, reaching 21.6 years in 1979, 1 year higher than it was in 1970. The median age of grooms rose even more than that of brides, increasing to 25.8 from 23.6 in 1970, or 2.2 years, across the decade. As with the brides, part of the increase in the median age was due to proportionately more remarriages among the marriages. The increase in age of groom at first marriage was 0.9 years between 1970 and 1979, with the rise occurring after 1974. The median age of previously divorced grooms fell between 1970 and 1979, from 34.5 to 33.9 years.

The statistics for the United States and each State presented in this report (tables 1 and 2) are based on total counts of marriages occurring during 1979. Data for the MRA (tables 3 and 4) are based on sample data and consequently are subject to sampling variability as well as other sources of error. Further discussion of sampling variability appears in the Technical notes.

Technical notes

Place and time of occurrence

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

Sources of data

Figures in tables 1 and 2 are based on totals reported by States and counties. All other figures in the tables are based on data tabulated from State-coded data tapes and from probability samples of records selected and coded in the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) from copies of the records sent in by States participating in the marriage-registration area (MRA). In 1978 the MRA consisted of the District of Columbia and all except nine States—Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington. In 1979 Colorado joined the MRA. Marriages performed in the MRA included 79 percent of the marriages registered in the United States in 1979.

Nonlicensed (confidential) marriages for California

Section 4213 of the California Civil Code allows unmarried couples who have been living together to be married confidentially without obtaining a marriage license or health certificate (which ordinarily requires a physician's examination and tests for syphilis and rubella). In March 1972 this section was amended to require county clerks to keep sealed records of these marriages and periodically to report the total number to the California State Department of Health Services. These records may not be opened to inspection without a court order on a showing of good cause.

Since reporting began, nonlicensed marriages have increased rapidly, totaling 2,857 in 1973; 10,555 in 1974; 19,061 in 1975; 30,125 in 1976; 32,008 in 1977; 37,462 in 1978; and 41,961 in 1979. NCHS has not included the nonlicensed California marriages in marriage totals or rates for years prior to 1978. However, beginning with final statistics for 1978, these nonlicensed marriages are included in the national and geographic totals and rates.

Table I shows the number of marriages and marriage rates for the United States in 1973-77, including the reported number of nonlicensed California marriages. Similarly, table II shows the number of marriages and the marriage rate for 1973-77, including

Table I. Marriages and marriage rates, including nonlicensed California marriages: United States, 1973-77

[Data refer to marriages occurring within the United States, including nonlicensed marriages registered in California. Rates are based on population estimated as of July 1]

Year	Number	Rate per 1,000—		
		Total population	Unmarried women 15 years and over	Unmarried women 15-44 years
1977	2,210,375	10.2	64.5	111.4
1976	2,184,932	10.2	66.2	115.0
1975	2,171,723	10.2	67.5	119.5
1974	2,240,222	10.6	72.4	129.1
1973	2,286,965	10.9	76.1	137.5

Table II. Marriages and marriage rates, including nonlicensed California marriages: West Region, Pacific Division, and California, 1973-77

[By place of occurrence. Data are counts of marriages performed, including nonlicensed marriages registered in California. Rates per 1,000 population in each area, estimated as of July 1]

Area and year	Number	Rate
West Region		
1977	480,428	12.2
1976	473,447	12.3
1975	461,454	12.2
1974	460,273	12.4
1973	458,589	12.5
Pacific Division		
1977	260,971	8.9
1976	257,239	9.0
1975	249,409	8.8
1974	246,619	8.9
1973	246,851	9.0
California		
1977	181,424	8.3
1976	181,409	8.4
1975	173,873	8.2
1974	171,442	8.2
1973	172,177	8.4

California nonlicensed marriages, for the West Region, the Pacific Division, and for California.

Marriage sample

Twelve States—Florida, Illinois, Maine, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York (except New York City), Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, and Virginia—supplied State-coded data tapes of all their marriage records through the Cooperative Health Statistics System (CHSS), and 100 percent of these records were used by NCHS. For all

other States in the MRA, records were sampled at different rates designed to give a sample of at least 2,500 for each State. All records were included in the sample for Alaska, Delaware, and the District of Columbia, where totals of less than 5,000 marriages had been anticipated, and for New York City. One-half of all records were included from 3 States, one-fifth from 6 States, one-tenth from 11 States, and one-twentieth from 8 States. The total sample size, including records supplied through CHSS, was 701,849 marriages. Sampling errors shown in table III are for frequencies which equal a specified percent of the total MRA marriages for either 1978 or 1979.

Nonlicensed marriages registered in California are not available for inclusion in the MRA marriage sample, because by California law the certificates for these marriages are retained as confidential records in the offices of the county clerks. The 5-percent sample of California marriages for 1978 was drawn from 150,594 licensed marriages, and the 1979 sample was drawn from 157,737 licensed marriages. The corresponding weights for sample records were based on these totals. Since no information is available on the characteristics of persons obtaining nonlicensed marriages, no accurate estimate is available for the bias introduced in sample estimates by the omission of these marriages. However, if the distribution of California nonlicensed marriages were the same as that of all licensed marriages, estimates shown in table 3 for 1979 would be about 2 percent low.

Sampling errors

All statistics for the MRA are estimates based on the systematic sample of marriages described above;

Table III. Approximate sampling errors of estimated numbers of marriages shown in table 3: Marriage-registration area, 1978-79

[Based on data excluding nonlicensed marriages registered in California]

<i>Percent of total MRA marriages in subclass</i>	<i>1979 sampling error</i>	<i>1978 sampling error</i>
1 or 99	414	406
2 or 98	582	572
3 or 97	710	697
4 or 96	815	800
5 or 95	907	890
7 or 93	1,061	1,042
10 or 90	1,248	1,225
15 or 85	1,485	1,458
20 or 80	1,664	1,634
25 or 75	1,801	1,768
50	2,080	2,042

How to use the sampling error table

Total numbers of MRA marriages in 1978 and 1979 (excluding nonlicensed California marriages) were 1,765,945 and 1,841,415, respectively. For any estimate of marriage shown in table 3, determine its ratio to total MRA marriages for the corresponding year. Then look in the appropriate row on the table of sampling errors for the percentage figures closest to the estimate to determine the sampling error for that year. For example, in 1979 there were an estimated 432,494 marriages to women who had been previously divorced, or 23.5 percent of all 1979 MRA marriages. Since 23.5 percent is between 20 and 25 percent, the 1979 sampling error is between 1,664 and 1,801, or by interpolation, about 1,760 marriages. Chances are about 68 out of 100 that the actual number of 1979 marriages to divorcees is between 430,734 and 434,254 ($432,494 \pm 1,760$).

therefore, these statistics are subject to sampling errors. A sampling error is a measure of variations that occur by chance between sample estimates and the actual quantity being estimated. Chances are about 68 out of 100 that an estimate would differ from the true value by less than the sampling error, and about 95 out of 100 that the difference would be less than twice the sampling error.

Symbols

- Data not available
- ... Category not applicable
- Quantity zero
- 0.0 Quantity more than zero but less than 0.05
- * Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision

This report represents summary tabulations from the final marriage statistics for 1979. More detailed tabulations for 1979 will be published in *Vital Statistics of the United States, Volume III—Marriage and Divorce*. Prior to the publication of the volume, the National Center for Health Statistics will respond to requests for unpublished data whenever possible.

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from the Office of Health Research, Statistics, and Technology
DHHS Publication No. (PHS) 81-1120