

First Divorces in the U.S., 2008

First Divorces, 2008

- The proportion of first marriages that end in divorce has been stable over the last 20 years in the U.S. About half of all first marriages end in separation or divorce (Raley & Bumpass, 2003).
- In 2008, over 4.9 million women were in their first marriage. For every 1,000 women in a first marriage, there were 19 divorces (Table 2)*.
- In 2008, first married women experienced lower divorce rates than remarried women. The divorce rate among women in first marriages is 35% lower than the divorce rate experienced by women in higher order (two or more) marriages (27 divorces per 1,000 women in higher order marriages).
- Most women who first divorced in 2008 had not remarried in the same year, but a small share (5.5%) had remarried.

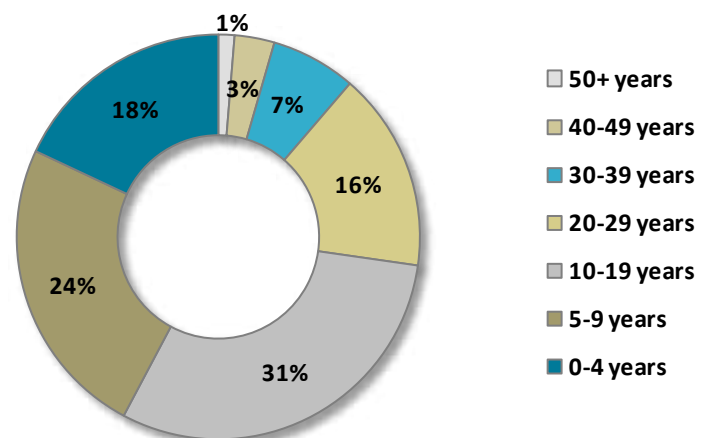
*The ACS asked all respondents in 2008 if they divorced in the past 12 months. Therefore, they could have divorced in 2007 or 2008. For ease of discussion, all women who reported divorcing in the past 12 months are considered to have divorced in 2008.

Family Profiles examine topics related to NCFMR's core research themes. Data are presented at both the national and state levels using new data sources. Written for both researchers and broad communities, these profiles summarize the latest statistics on U.S. families.

How Long Did the Marriage Last (Figure 1), 2008?

- The average duration (mean) of first marriage among women who first divorced in 2008 (and had not already re-married) was about 15 years.
- About 82% of women who divorced in 2008 were married at least five years.
- Half of women who first divorced in 2008 reached their 11th anniversary.
- Only 1% of women who divorced in 2008 were married for 50 or more years.

Figure 1. Percentage of First Divorces by Duration of Marriage at Time of Divorce Among Women Aged 15 and Older, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008

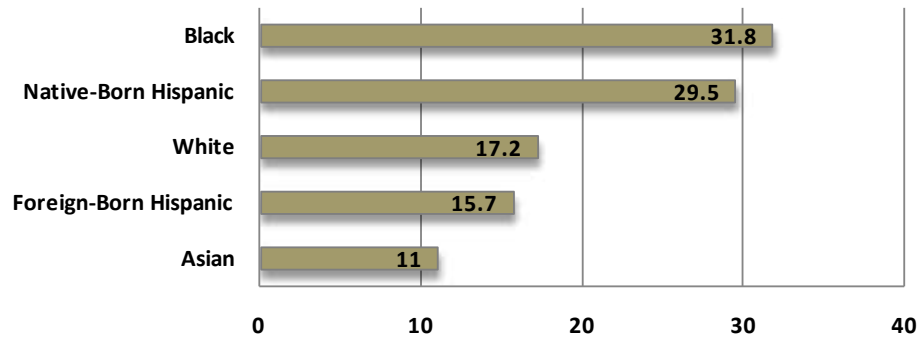
Ratio of First Marriages to First Divorces, 2008

- The ratio of first marriages to first divorces enumerates how many marriages occur for every divorce in a given time period. A ratio larger than one indicates more women are marrying than divorcing. When the ratio is close to one, it indicates that an equal number of women are marrying and divorcing or that the proportion of currently married women is relatively stable. A ratio less than one signifies more women divorced than married, and thus marriage may be losing ground.
 - In 2008, there were more first marriages than first divorces, and the ratio of first marriages to first divorces in the U.S. was 1.68 (Table 3). In other words, 1.68 first marriages occurred for every first divorce.
 - The ratio of *all* marriages to *all* divorces is 1.83—higher than the ratio of *first* marriages to *first* divorces (FP-09-02).

Racial and Ethnic Variation in the Rate of First Divorce, 2008

- Among the racial and ethnic groups examined, the highest rates of first divorce are found among Black and native-born Hispanic women (Figure 2).
 - In 2008, 32 divorces occurred per 1,000 Black women and 30 per 1,000 native-born Hispanic women in a first marriage.
- The rate of first divorce is lowest among Asian-Americans (11.0) followed by foreign-born Hispanics (15.7) and Whites (17.2).
- Black women are more than twice as likely as Asians and foreign-born Hispanics to have experienced a first divorce in 2008.

Figure 2. Rate of First Divorce per 1,000 Women in a First Marriage Aged 15 and Older by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity Status, 2008

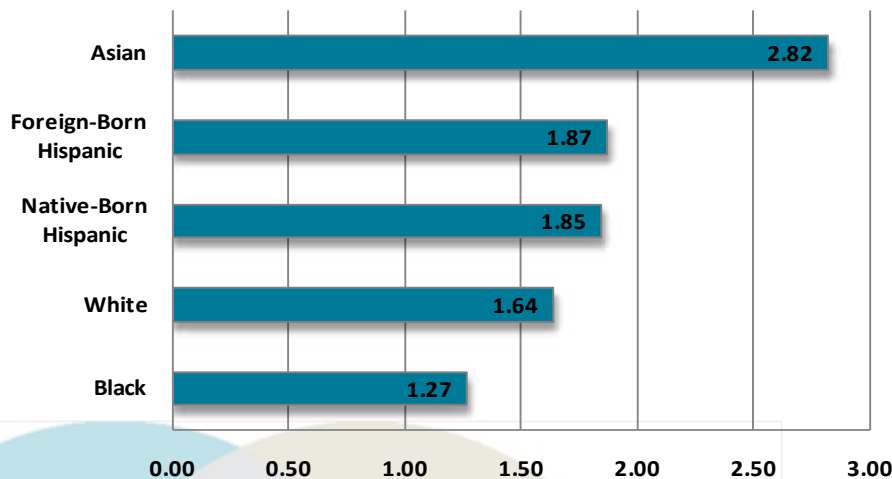


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008

Racial and Ethnic Variation in the Ratio of First Marriages to First Divorces, 2008

- Among each racial and ethnic group examined here, there were more marriages than divorces in 2008 (Figure 3).
- The highest ratio of first marriages to first divorces is found among Asian-Americans. In 2008, there were nearly 3 marriages for every 1 divorce among Asian women.
- The ratio of first marriages to first divorces is lowest among Black women. There were about 1.3 marriages for every 1 divorce among Black women.

Figure 3. Ratio of First Marriages to First Divorces Among Women Aged 15 and Older by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity, 2008

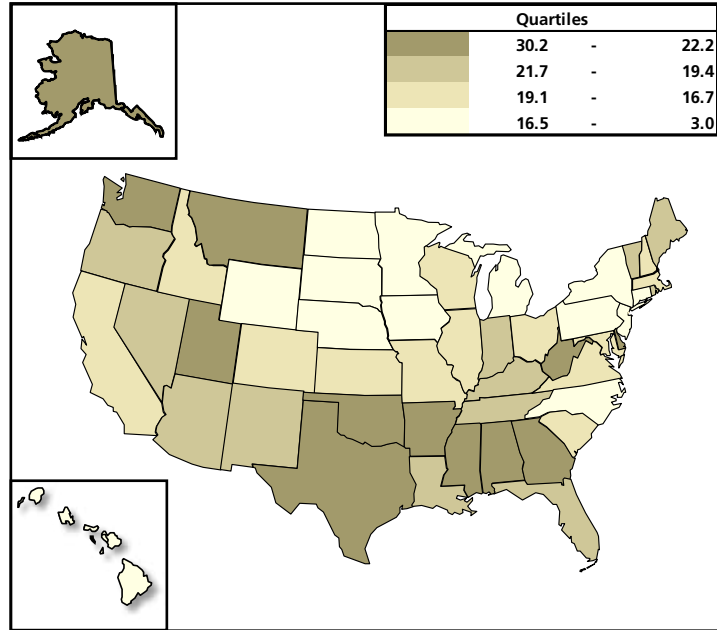


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008

Geographic Variation in the Rate of First Divorce, 2008

- States with the highest rates of first divorce are predominately found in the Southern Region of the U.S. (Washington, DC, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama, West Virginia, and Texas) (Figure 4).
 - In Washington, DC, roughly 30 women per 1,000 who have been married once experienced a first divorce in 2008.
- States with the lowest rates of first divorce are predominately found in the Mid-Western Region of the U.S. (Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, and North Dakota).
 - In North Dakota, only 3 women per 1,000 who have been married once experienced a first divorce in 2008.
- For a ranking table with all states organized by quartiles, [click here](#).

Figure 4. Geographic Variation in the Rate of First Divorce, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008

Table 1. States with the Highest and Lowest First Marriage to First Divorce Ratio Among Women Aged 15 and Older, 2008

Rank	State	Ratio	MOE
1	North Dakota	21.00	+/- 18.01
2	South Dakota	4.30	+/- 3.48
3	Wyoming	2.97	+/- 2.12
4	Nebraska	2.87	+/- 1.02
5	Iowa	2.59	+/- 0.82
United States		1.68	+/- 0.05
47	Washington	1.31	+/- 0.22
48	West Virginia	1.29	+/- 0.44
49	Vermont	1.28	+/- 0.92
50	Montana	0.97	+/- 0.48
51	Delaware	0.93	+/- 0.52

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008

Five States with the Highest and Lowest Ratio of First Marriages to First Divorces, 2008

- In 2008, there were many more first marriages compared to first divorces in North Dakota (Table 1). Approximately 21 first marriages occurred for every first divorce.
 - North Dakota is an extreme with the highest first marriage rate and lowest first divorce rate. South Dakota, ranked second among all fifty states, has about 4 first marriages for every first divorce.
- Montana and Delaware have the lowest ratios of first marriages to first divorces, about 1 first marriage for every first divorce occurred in 2008.
- For a ranking table with all states, [click here](#).

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Table 2. Rate of First Divorces per 1,000 Women Aged 15 and Older in a First Marriage by State, Organized by Quartiles, 2008

Rank	State	Rate	MOE
1	Wash, DC	30.2	+/- 13.4
2	Delaware	26.9	+/- 11.6
3	Washington	25.6	+/- 3.1
4	Oklahoma	24.7	+/- 4.3
5	Mississippi	24.4	+/- 4.8
6	Arkansas	23.8	+/- 5.1
7	Alaska	22.8	+/- 11.8
8	West Virginia	22.7	+/- 5.7
8	Alabama	22.7	+/- 4.6
10	Montana	22.5	+/- 7.7
11	Utah	22.2	+/- 4.8
11	Texas	22.2	+/- 1.7
13	Georgia	21.7	+/- 2.6
14	Louisiana	21.5	+/- 4.1
15	Tennessee	21.4	+/- 3.0
15	Arizona	21.4	+/- 3.3
17	Kentucky	21.2	+/- 3.7
18	Maine	20.2	+/- 7.6
18	Rhode Island	20.1	+/- 6.6
20	Vermont	19.9	+/- 10.0
20	Oregon	19.9	+/- 4.0
22	Florida	19.8	+/- 1.7
22	Nevada	19.8	+/- 4.4
24	Indiana	19.6	+/- 3.0
25	New Mexico	19.4	+/- 5.2
26	California	19.1	+/- 1.3
26	Idaho	19.1	+/- 6.5
	United States	18.7	+/- 0.4
28	Illinois	18.7	+/- 2.1
29	Ohio	18.6	+/- 2.0
30	Missouri	18.4	+/- 3.3
31	Virginia	18.3	+/- 2.4
32	Maryland	18.1	+/- 2.9
33	Kansas	18.0	+/- 4.5
34	South Carolina	17.9	+/- 2.7
35	New Hampshire	17.2	+/- 6.5
35	Colorado	17.2	+/- 3.5
37	Wisconsin	16.7	+/- 3.2
38	Massachusetts	16.5	+/- 2.4
39	Hawaii	16.4	+/- 6.7
39	North Carolina	16.4	+/- 1.7
41	Pennsylvania	16.2	+/- 1.8
42	New Jersey	15.6	+/- 1.6
43	Connecticut	15.4	+/- 3.2
44	Michigan	14.8	+/- 1.9
44	Minnesota	14.8	+/- 3.0
46	New York	14.0	+/- 1.2
47	Nebraska	13.7	+/- 4.0
48	Iowa	13.6	+/- 3.5
49	Wyoming	11.6	+/- 7.0
50	South Dakota	7.6	+/- 5.3
51	North Dakota	3.0	+/- 2.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008

Table 3. Ratio of First Marriages to First Divorces Among Women Aged 15 and Older by State, Organized by Quartiles, 2008

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Rank	State	Ratio	MOE
1	North Dakota	21.00	+/- 18.01
2	South Dakota	4.30	+/- 3.48
3	Wyoming	2.97	+/- 2.12
4	Nebraska	2.87	+/- 1.02
5	Iowa	2.59	+/- 0.82
6	Minnesota	2.33	+/- 0.54
7	Wash, DC	2.21	+/- 1.19
8	Colorado	2.13	+/- 0.50
9	New York	2.09	+/- 0.23
10	Nevada	2.07	+/- 0.57
11	Hawaii	2.05	+/- 0.94
12	Utah	1.95	+/- 0.54
13	Wisconsin	1.94	+/- 0.45
14	Idaho	1.90	+/- 0.75
14	Maryland	1.90	+/- 0.37
16	North Carolina	1.88	+/- 0.27
17	Kansas	1.85	+/- 0.56
18	Oklahoma	1.82	+/- 0.40
19	Missouri	1.80	+/- 0.39
20	New Mexico	1.78	+/- 0.63
21	California	1.76	+/- 0.14
21	Arkansas	1.76	+/- 0.46
23	Connecticut	1.73	+/- 0.46
23	Oregon	1.73	+/- 0.41
25	Michigan	1.71	+/- 0.29
26	Virginia	1.68	+/- 0.27
	United States	1.68	+/- 0.05
27	Louisiana	1.64	+/- 0.40
28	New Jersey	1.62	+/- 0.23
29	Pennsylvania	1.60	+/- 0.21
30	Alabama	1.58	+/- 0.37
31	Alaska	1.57	+/- 0.99
32	New Hampshire	1.56	+/- 0.73
32	Indiana	1.56	+/- 0.30
34	Texas	1.54	+/- 0.15
35	Illinois	1.51	+/- 0.22
36	Rhode Island	1.50	+/- 0.62
37	Georgia	1.49	+/- 0.22
37	Tennessee	1.49	+/- 0.28
39	Florida	1.48	+/- 0.16
40	Ohio	1.47	+/- 0.20
40	Massachusetts	1.42	+/- 0.26
40	Kentucky	1.42	+/- 0.31
43	South Carolina	1.38	+/- 0.30
44	Maine	1.35	+/- 0.62
45	Mississippi	1.33	+/- 0.34
46	Arizona	1.32	+/- 0.25
47	Washington	1.31	+/- 0.22
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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008

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