

# Divorce Rate in the U.S.: Geographic Variation, 2017

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## Introduction

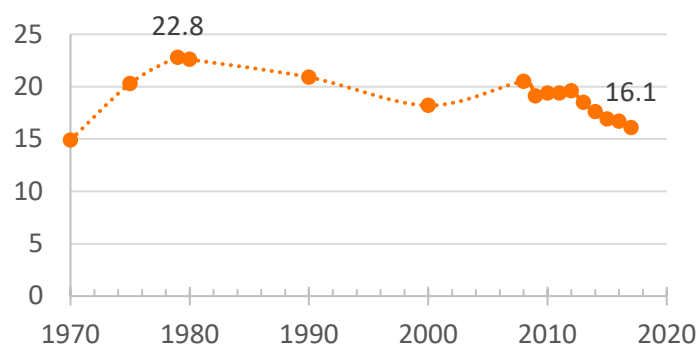
In this profile, an update to a previous profile on the divorce rate (FP-17-24), we estimate adjusted divorce rates for the nation and each state for 2017. Using American Community Survey data, we enumerate estimates of the number of divorces occurring in the last year among married women, calculate their margins of error, and provide information on their geographic variation. For detailed information on the adjusted divorce rate from 2008-2017, see Charting Marriage & Divorce in the U.S.: The Adjusted Divorce Rate.

## U.S. Divorce Rate, 2017\*

- The divorce rate continued to decline in 2017, decreasing from 16.7 divorces per 1,000 married women aged 15 and older in 2016 to 16.1 divorces per 1,000 married women in 2017.
- Just over one million women (1,075,500) divorced in 2017, a drop of about 23,000 from 2016, and a drop from the recent peak in 2008 of around 230,000.
- The divorce rate had decreased by 28.8% from the historical highpoint in 1979 (22.8) to 2016 (16.1).

\* The divorce rate = [(number of women divorced in the past 12 months) / (number of women divorced in the past 12 months + number of currently married women)]\*1000

Figure 1. Women's Adjusted Divorce Rate, 1970-2017



Source: 1970-2000, National Center for Health Statistics; 2008-2017, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-yr est

## Five Highest and Lowest Divorce Rates, 2017

- Arkansas continued to hold the top spot in terms of the divorce rate. In 2017, Arkansas had 25.5 marriages per 1,000 ending in divorce.
- Hawaii had a low divorce rate, with only 10 marriages per 1,000 ending in divorce. The lowest divorce rate was half as high as the highest divorce rate.

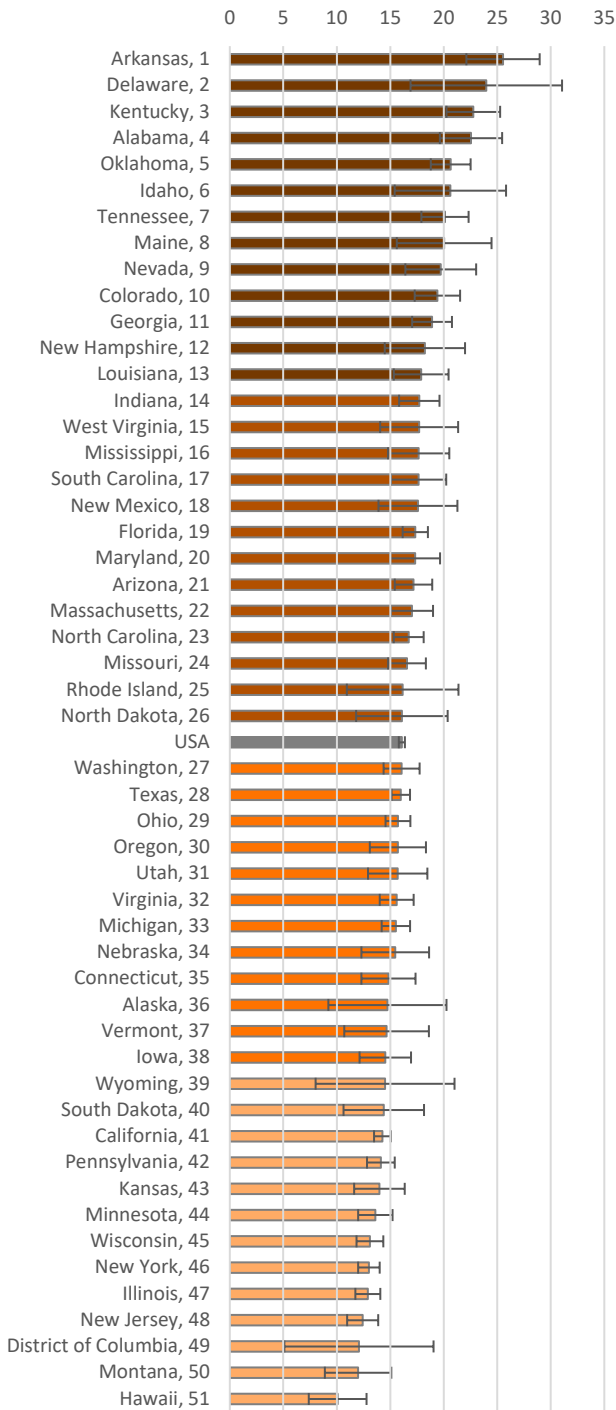
Table 1. Women's Highest and Lowest Divorce Rates, 2017

Rank & State	Divorce Rate	MOE*
1. Arkansas	25.5	+/- 3.4
2. Delaware	24.0	+/- 7.1
3. Kentucky	22.8	+/- 2.5
4. Alabama	22.5	+/- 2.9
5. Oklahoma	20.6	+/- 1.9
<b>U.S.</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>+/- 0.3</b>
47. Illinois	12.9	+/- 1.2
48. New Jersey	12.4	+/- 1.5
49. District of Columbia	12.1	+/- 7.0
50. Montana	12.0	+/- 3.1
51. Hawaii	10.1	+/- 2.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 1-yr est.  
 \*MOE = Margin of Error. The MOE is a measure of sampling error and expresses the maximum range in which the rate is expected to differ from the actual population. The MOE is calculated for the derived estimates at the 90% confidence level.

# State Rankings in Divorce Rate, 2017

Figure 2. State Variation in the Adjusted Divorce Rate per 1,000 Married Women Aged 15+ by Quartile, 2017



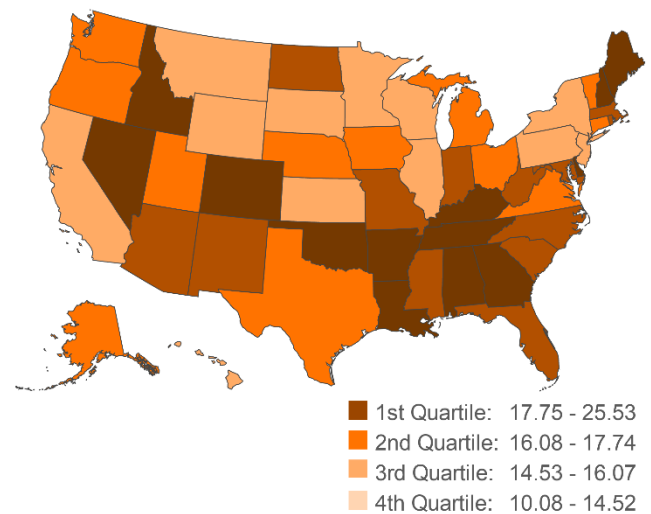
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 1-yr est.

### Suggested Citation:

Schweizer, V. (2018). Divorce rate in the U.S.: Geographic variation, 2017. *Family Profiles*, FP-17-21. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <https://doi.org/10.25035/ncfmr/fp-18-21>.

- The states with the highest divorce rates (making up the 1st quartile) had rates of at least 17.9 divorces per 1,000 married women in 2017. Among the states in the top quartile, those with divorce rates that were significantly higher than the national average were Arkansas, Delaware, Kentucky, Alabama, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Colorado, and Georgia.
- The states that experienced the lowest divorce rates (making up the 4th quartile) in 2017 had fewer than 14.5 divorces per 1,000 married women. Among the states in the bottom quartile, those with divorce rates significantly lower than the national average were Hawaii, Montana, New Jersey, Illinois, New York, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and California.
- States with the highest divorce rates (1st or 2nd quartiles) were spread out around the country. However, the highest concentration was found among Southern states, with two-thirds (67%) having divorce rates falling in the top quartile.
- States in the Northeast and Midwest had the lowest divorce rates (3rd or 4th quartiles).
  - Over half (54%) of Northeastern states had divorce rates in the bottom quartile.
  - Over half (57%) of Mid-Western states had divorce rates in the 3rd quartile.

Figure 3. Geographic Variation of Women’s Adjusted Divorce Rate Among States, 2017



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