

2004

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Wisconsin  
**Marriages**  
and **Divorces**

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*Bureau of Health Information and Policy  
Division of Public Health  
Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services*

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## Introduction

This report presents key information about marriages and divorces that occurred in Wisconsin in 2004. It also contains information from selected previous years, as well as information on the number and rate of marriages and divorces, both in Wisconsin and nationally. The sources of data for Wisconsin are marriage and divorce certificates on file with the Bureau of Health Information and Policy, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Family Services.

The collection of marriage and divorce data is mandated by Chapter 69 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Chapter 69 authorizes the Department of Health and Family Services to supervise and direct the collection of these data. This statute also specifies how local registrars are to collect and file certificates of marriage.

The Department of Health and Family Services produced this publication. Staff of the Vital Records Registration and Statistics Unit, Bureau of Health Information and Policy, collected and compiled the marriage and divorce records. Joyce Knapton drafted the summaries in this report and produced the computer programs to generate the tables. Patricia Nametz edited the report. The report was prepared under the supervision of John Kiesow, State Registrar, Vital Records Section, and Jane Kraus, Supervisor, Registration and Statistics Unit. Susan Wood, Director, Bureau of Health Information and Policy, provided overall direction.

The Bureau of Health Information and Policy would like to thank the County Clerks for issuing accurate marriage licenses and the local Register of Deeds offices for their accurate recording of all marriage records.

This report is available on the Department of Health and Family Services Web site, at [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/stats/marriages.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/stats/marriages.htm).

Comments, suggestions, and requests for additional marriage or divorce data may be addressed to:

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## Key Findings

- A total of 34,056 marriages occurred in Wisconsin in 2004, representing a slight decrease from the 34,220 marriages that occurred in 2003. These counts reflect all marriages that occurred in Wisconsin (of both residents and non-residents of the state).
- Wisconsin's marriage rate in 2004 was 6.2 per 1,000 total population, identical to the 2003 rate. The marriage rate has gradually declined since 1980, when the rate was 8.7.
- The marriage rate in Wisconsin has been consistently lower than the national rate for more than 80 years. The United States provisional marriage rate for the twelve months ending in October 2004 was 7.4 per 1,000 population.
- The median age for first marriages in 2004 was 24.9 years for women and 26.4 years for men. In 1960, the median age at first marriage was 20.4 for brides and 22.9 for grooms.
- Since 1960, the bride in a first marriage, on average, has been approximately two years younger than the groom.
- In 2004, the months with the highest number of marriages were June, August and October. August was the most popular month to marry.
- Milwaukee County had the highest number of marriages in 2004 (4,846), followed by Dane County (2,726), Waukesha County (2,165), and Brown County (1,603). These are Wisconsin's four most populous counties. Each of these counties had a decrease in the number of marriages from 2003 to 2004.
- A total of 16,802 divorces occurred in Wisconsin in 2004, for a divorce rate of 3.1 per 1,000 total population. This is identical to the 2003 rate (3.1).
- The divorce rate in Wisconsin has been consistently lower than the national rate for more than 80 years. For the 12 months ending in October 2004, the provisional United States divorce rate was 3.7.
- The total number of Wisconsin divorces that occurred in 2004 was 49 percent of the total number of Wisconsin marriages that occurred. This is slightly lower than the 2003 percentage (50 percent).
- The highest number of divorces occurred in Milwaukee County (2,449 divorces and 9 annulments), followed by Dane County (1,339 divorces and 13 annulments) and Waukesha County (1,086 divorces and 2 annulments), reflecting the large populations of these three counties.
- Fifty-four percent of all Wisconsin divorces in 2004 involved families with children under 18 years of age. Among divorces involving families with children, an average of 1.8 children were affected by each divorce.

**Table 1. Marriages and Marriage Rates, Wisconsin and United States, Selected Years, 1920-2004**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Wisconsin Marriages</u>	<u>Wisconsin Marriage Rate*</u>	<u>United States Marriage Rate*</u>
1920	22,293	8.4	12.0
1925	16,385	5.8	10.3
1930	15,328	5.2	9.2
1935	21,075	6.9	10.4
1940	23,379	7.5	12.1
1945	25,269	8.5	12.2
1950	29,081	8.4	11.1
1955	25,543	7.0	9.3
1960	24,573	6.2	8.5
1965	28,410	6.7	9.3
1970	34,415	7.8	10.6
1975	35,888	7.9	10.0
1980	41,113	8.7	10.6
1985	40,014	8.4	10.1
1990	38,934	8.0	9.8
1995	36,354	7.1	8.9
2000	36,100	6.7	8.5
2001	34,790	6.5	8.4
2002	34,241	6.3	7.9
2003	34,220	6.2	7.5
2004	34,056	6.2	7.4

Source: U.S. marriage rates are from the National Center for Health Statistics, *National Vital Statistics Reports*. Wisconsin numbers and rates are from the Bureau of Health Information and Policy, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Family Services. The Wisconsin marriage rate for 2004 was calculated using 2003 population figures.

\* Rates shown are marriages per 1,000 total population.

Notes: The Wisconsin numbers and rates reflect marriages that occurred in Wisconsin. The U.S. marriage rate for 2003 is provisional based on marriages that occurred January-December, 2003. The U.S. marriage rate for 2004 is provisional based on marriages that occurred in the 12 months ending in October, 2004.

- A total of 34,056 marriages occurred in Wisconsin in 2004, representing a slight decrease from the 34,220 marriages that occurred in 2003.
- Wisconsin's marriage rate in 2004 was 6.2 per 1,000 total population, identical to the 2003 rate. The marriage rate has gradually declined since 1980, when the rate was 8.7.

**Table 2. Median Age at First Marriage and All Remarriages, Wisconsin 1960-2004**

Year	First Marriages		All Remarriages	
	Bride	Groom	Bride	Groom
1960	20.4	22.9	39.9	45.1
1965	20.6	22.5	40.4	45.2
1970	20.8	22.6	37.4	42.6
1975	20.8	22.7	32.4	37.1
1980	21.7	23.5	31.7	34.9
1985	22.9	24.7	33.7	36.9
1990	23.8	25.5	38.3	41.6
1991	23.9	25.6	38.6	41.7
1992	24.1	25.7	38.8	42.3
1993	24.2	25.8	39.0	42.0
1994	24.3	25.8	39.4	42.3
1995	24.5	26.0	39.9	42.6
1996	24.6	26.2	40.4	43.6
1997	24.6	26.3	40.7	43.4
1998	24.6	26.3	41.1	43.9
1999	24.6	26.3	41.6	44.5
2000	24.7	26.3	41.7	44.6
2001	24.7	26.3	42.3	45.2
2002	24.8	26.3	42.9	45.5
2003	24.8	26.4	43.3	46.0
2004	24.9	26.4	43.7	46.6

Source: Bureau of Health Information and Policy, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Family Services.

Note: The median age is one way of expressing the average age, and represents the midpoint of all persons in the group (half are older and half are younger than the median age). For example, in 2000 the median age for brides at first marriage was 24.7, meaning that half of all brides being married for the first time in 2000 were younger, and half were older, than 24.7. The numbers in this table reflect all marriages that occurred in Wisconsin in the stated years.

- The median age for first marriages in 2004 was 24.9 years for women and 26.4 years for men. In 1960, the median age at first marriage was 20.4 for brides and 22.9 for grooms.
- Since 1960, the bride in a first marriage, on average, has been approximately two years younger than the groom.



## Marriages

**Table 3. Marriages and Remarriages by Age of Bride and Groom, Wisconsin 2004**

Age in Years	Bride					Groom				
	Total Marriages	First	Second	Third	Fourth or More	Total Marriages	First	Second	Third	Fourth or More
	<b>34,056</b>	<b>23,965</b>	<b>7,880</b>	<b>1,810</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>34,056</b>	<b>24,292</b>	<b>7,708</b>	<b>1,697</b>	<b>359</b>
16	87	87				8	8			
17	119	119				24	24			
18	516	516				168	168			
19	804	801	3			366	366			
20	1,120	1,110	10			615	611	4		
21	1,571	1,557	14			955	952	3		
22	2,103	2,071	32			1,460	1,453	7		
23	2,519	2,450	68	1		1,939	1,913	26		
24	2,517	2,435	79	3		2,236	2,202	32	2	
25-29	9,076	8,035	992	45	4	9,708	9,134	558	15	1
30-34	4,489	2,804	1,497	169	19	5,393	4,119	1,194	77	3
35-39	2,950	1,073	1,507	312	58	3,497	1,815	1,464	203	15
40-44	2,319	497	1,334	413	75	2,634	865	1,417	314	38
45-49	1,641	240	980	320	101	1,935	377	1,140	344	74
50-54	1,037	99	594	268	76	1,324	178	766	292	88
55-59	555	41	346	138	30	804	64	458	208	74
60-64	297	16	191	71	19	439	28	247	123	41
65-69	158	5	105	36	12	228	8	155	49	16
70-74	100	6	74	18	2	155	2	111	36	6
75+	78	3	54	16	5	168	5	126	34	3

Source: Bureau of Health Information and Policy, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Family Services.

Note: Totals shown represent marriages that occurred in Wisconsin in 2004.

- For first-time brides and grooms, the highest number of marriages occurred between the ages of 22 and 29.
- In 2004, first-time grooms in Wisconsin outnumbered first-time brides by over 300.

## Marriages

**Table 4. Monthly Marriage Totals by County, Wisconsin 2004**

<u>County</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>	<u>Jul</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sep</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
<b>State Total</b>	<b>34,056</b>	<b>1,206</b>	<b>1,583</b>	<b>1,379</b>	<b>1,820</b>	<b>3,552</b>	<b>4,287</b>	<b>4,086</b>	<b>4,405</b>	<b>4,089</b>	<b>4,350</b>	<b>1,589</b>	<b>1,710</b>
Adams	136	6	13	8	10	15	22	15	11	15	9	6	6
Ashland	143	2	12	4	4	5	15	31	30	16	13	6	5
Barron	348	12	15	24	11	32	43	46	40	49	47	8	21
Bayfield	166	4	2	4	7	12	28	28	27	24	19	5	6
Brown	1,603	39	80	63	97	168	195	192	209	176	233	72	79
Buffalo	83	4	5	1	5	9	12	7	5	8	19	5	3
Burnett	126	3	5	5	7	15	10	15	20	16	15	8	7
Calumet	222	8	12	6	8	25	28	28	35	26	32	7	7
Chippewa	439	21	21	14	26	55	49	54	54	56	52	23	14
Clark	226	8	12	7	18	26	24	28	26	26	32	8	11
Columbia	388	17	17	14	26	43	53	37	46	42	50	21	22
Crawford	129	5	6	4	5	15	14	15	18	21	17	5	4
Dane	2,726	110	118	113	157	319	347	318	355	294	338	121	136
Dodge	497	14	19	17	35	51	62	55	60	72	57	26	29
Door	442	15	13	10	8	43	67	61	52	64	77	12	20
Douglas	246	8	10	12	13	31	33	34	33	21	21	17	13
Dunn	224	8	11	8	11	22	30	28	35	28	22	10	11
Eau Claire	645	23	31	25	35	65	88	73	86	74	78	32	35
Florence	20	1	1	1		3	2		3	4	4		1
Fond du Lac	653	20	18	27	42	76	74	72	84	81	92	29	38
Forest	67	2	4	4	5	6	7	6	11	4	10	3	5
Grant	290	10	6	7	15	37	39	36	45	37	36	11	11
Green	194	5	3	4	6	24	33	30	19	16	29	9	16
Green Lake	157	8	6	8	7	17	25	15	18	27	17	3	6
Iowa	186	6	1	4	9	16	29	25	20	31	30	10	5
Iron	46	2	3	1	2		2	12	10	6	5	1	2
Jackson	142	4	9	4	5	10	18	19	19	18	23	7	6
Jefferson	545	20	30	30	23	61	61	60	68	63	69	35	25
Juneau	179	7	8	5	12	18	25	21	19	26	28	5	5
Kenosha	771	23	45	34	54	67	72	93	94	95	96	53	45
Kewaunee	109	4	6	3	6	13	13	16	12	15	12	5	4
La Crosse	736	30	38	25	33	84	74	97	109	86	103	30	27
Lafayette	122	3	5	4	7	16	12	13	14	16	17	11	4
Langlade	134	3	3	9	3	9	14	25	26	17	16	2	7
Lincoln	204	5	12	7	9	22	36	29	21	20	29	7	7
Manitowoc	510	17	23	14	28	55	68	69	58	65	72	18	23
Marathon	826	27	44	35	44	91	117	103	116	80	100	44	25
Marinette	261	7	12	10	10	26	38	30	42	37	28	7	14
Marquette	80	2	4	5	5	6	13	8	14	4	8	1	10
Menominee	33	1	2	2	2	3	4	5	5	4	2	1	2
Milwaukee	4,846	208	244	221	268	523	568	553	579	561	566	281	274
Monroe	331	14	37	19	18	47	34	38	29	32	34	14	15
Oconto	201	8	18	12	8	19	23	19	23	23	28	8	12

## Marriages

**Table 4. Monthly Marriage Totals by County, Wisconsin 2004**

<u>County</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>	<u>Jul</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sep</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
Oneida	297	11	13	8	15	21	41	39	49	35	35	13	17
Outagamie	1,259	44	51	58	62	127	156	145	178	159	163	56	60
Ozaukee	454	13	19	10	29	39	59	61	63	58	60	24	19
Pepin	51	1	2	1	2	3	5	10	6	7	7	1	6
Pierce	188	4	7	7	10	18	25	27	21	24	32	6	7
Polk	275	8	11	6	14	28	40	34	43	26	38	6	21
Portage	378	11	18	9	16	36	42	60	48	46	60	15	17
Price	101	3	2	6	6	12	21	15	11	9	10	3	3
Racine	967	52	58	50	60	78	112	106	140	116	104	51	40
Richland	120	3	9	3	8	10	9	15	17	13	14	8	11
Rock	857	25	46	47	46	88	116	102	102	105	102	41	37
Rusk	116	2	7	9	2	12	18	15	14	18	9	4	6
St. Croix	436	19	21	18	22	41	56	45	62	54	52	18	28
Sauk	517	16	18	22	31	51	71	64	58	54	68	30	34
Sawyer	119	5	6	6	4	6	12	13	24	18	16	6	3
Shawano	266	10	17	6	19	29	27	25	38	28	42	13	12
Sheboygan	831	36	33	40	31	86	119	112	90	96	103	39	46
Taylor	129	3	6	4	10	15	15	15	19	13	15	7	7
Trempealeau	167	2	4	5	14	25	23	15	24	20	23	4	8
Vernon	199	7	8	6	12	20	28	24	27	23	25	9	10
Vilas	162	3	3	3	9	11	23	24	23	28	22	5	8
Walworth	793	29	32	33	38	72	99	102	108	104	112	24	40
Washburn	118	4	4	5	6	9	25	14	14	16	11	4	6
Washington	650	12	33	21	32	73	92	79	74	95	91	21	27
Waukesha	2,165	73	93	88	115	242	260	224	269	285	302	114	100
Waupaca	447	12	13	9	23	51	62	49	57	61	69	17	24
Waushara	146	5	4	13	5	13	19	18	28	16	14	6	5
Winnebago	951	38	46	36	51	87	139	110	136	116	101	34	57
Wood	465	11	15	16	24	49	52	65	62	50	65	23	33

Source: Bureau of Health Information and Policy, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Family Services.

Note: These numbers represent marriages that occurred in Wisconsin in 2004.

- In 2004, the months with the highest number of marriages were June, August and October. August was the most popular month to marry.
- Milwaukee County had the highest number of marriages in 2004 (4,846), followed by Dane County (2,726), Waukesha County (2,165), and Brown County (1,603). These are Wisconsin's four most populous counties. Each of these counties had a decrease in the number of marriages from 2003 to 2004.
- The lowest number of marriages occurred in the counties of Florence (20), Menominee (33) and Iron (46).

**Table 5. Divorces and Divorce Rates, Wisconsin and United States, Selected Years, 1920-2004**

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<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Wisconsin Divorces</u>	<u>Wisconsin Divorce Rate*</u>	<u>United States Divorce Rate*</u>
1920	2,425	0.9	1.6
1925	2,467	0.9	1.5
1930	2,553	0.9	1.6
1935	3,543	1.2	1.7
1940	3,599	1.1	2.0
1945	6,393	2.2	3.5
1950	4,845	1.4	2.6
1955	4,720	1.3	2.3
1960	3,672	0.9	2.2
1965	5,232	1.2	2.5
1970	8,930	2.0	3.5
1975	13,187	2.9	4.8
1980	17,589	3.7	5.2
1985	16,596	3.5	5.0
1990	17,727	3.6	4.7
1995	17,313	3.4	4.4
2000	17,388	3.2	4.2
2001	17,457	3.3	4.0
2002	17,471	3.2	4.0
2003	17,150	3.1	3.8
2004	16,802	3.1	3.7

Source: U.S. divorce rates are from the National Center for Health Statistics, *National Vital Statistics Reports*. Wisconsin numbers and rates are from the Bureau of Health Information and Policy, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Family Services. The Wisconsin divorce rate for 2004 was calculated using 2003 population figures.

\* Rates shown are divorces and annulments per 1,000 total population.

Notes: The Wisconsin numbers and rates represent divorces and annulments occurring in Wisconsin. The U.S. divorce rate for 2003 is provisional based on divorces that occurred in the 12 months ending in December, 2003. The U.S. divorce rate for 2004 is provisional based on divorces that occurred in the 12 months ending in October, 2004.

- A total of 16,802 divorces occurred in Wisconsin in 2004, for a divorce rate of 3.1 per 1,000 population. This is identical to the 2003 rate (3.1).
- The total number of Wisconsin divorces that occurred in 2004 was 49 percent of the total number of Wisconsin marriages that occurred. This is slightly lower than the 2003 percentage (50 percent).

## Divorces

**Table 6. Divorces and Annulments by County, Wisconsin 2004**

<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces</u>	<u>Annulments</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces</u>	<u>Annulments</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,756</b>	<b>46</b>			
Adams	79		Marathon	282	
Ashland	54		Marinette	156	2
Barron	170		Marquette	63	1
Bayfield	58		Menominee	1	
Brown	728	1	Milwaukee	2,449	9
Buffalo	43		Monroe	175	1
Burnett	57		Oconto	101	
Calumet	134		Oneida	143	
Chippewa	213	1	Outagamie	554	1
Clark	77		Ozaukee	245	1
Columbia	173		Pepin	22	
Crawford	45		Pierce	106	
Dane	1,339	13	Polk	140	
Dodge	289	1	Portage	192	4
Door	85		Price	51	
Douglas	146		Racine	522	1
Dunn	113		Richland	64	
Eau Claire	309		Rock	532	1
Florence	18		Rusk	39	
Fond du Lac	317		St. Croix	248	
Forest	36		Sauk	202	
Grant	132		Sawyer	64	
Green	106		Shawano	132	1
Green Lake	49		Sheboygan	353	
Iowa	71		Taylor	52	
Iron	16		Trempealeau	90	1
Jackson	70		Vernon	89	
Jefferson	292		Vilas	92	
Juneau	101		Walworth	291	1
Kenosha	575	3	Washburn	59	
Kewaunee	42		Washington	377	
La Crosse	380		Waukesha	1,086	2
Lafayette	41		Waupaca	206	
Langlade	60		Waushara	95	
Lincoln	80		Winnebago	520	
Manitowoc	228	1	Wood	237	

Source: Bureau of Health Information and Policy, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Family Services.

Note: These numbers represent divorces and annulments that occurred in Wisconsin in 2004.

- The highest number of divorces occurred in Milwaukee County (2,449 divorces and 9 annulments), followed by Dane County (1,339 divorces and 13 annulments) and Waukesha County (1,086 divorces and 2 annulments), reflecting the large populations of these three counties.
- The lowest number of divorces occurred in the counties of Menominee (1 divorce), Iron (16 divorces) and Florence (18 divorces).

## Divorces

**Table 7. Divorces Affecting Children Under 18 Years of Age by County, Wisconsin 2004**

<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces Granted</u>	<u>Those Affecting Children &lt; 18</u>	<u>No. of Children &lt; 18 Affected</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces Granted</u>	<u>Those Affecting Children &lt; 18</u>	<u>No. of Children &lt; 18 Affected</u>
<b>State Total</b>	<b>16,802</b>	<b>9,052</b>	<b>16,623</b>				
Adams	79	46	84	Marathon	282	141	289
Ashland	54	30	51	Marinette	158	87	148
Barron	170	102	184	Marquette	64	28	59
Bayfield	58	29	55	Menominee	1	0	0
Brown	729	390	717	Milwaukee	2,458	1,212	2,260
Buffalo	43	24	47	Monroe	176	90	167
Burnett	57	22	48	Oconto	101	54	99
Calumet	134	78	135	Oneida	143	94	184
Chippewa	214	111	198	Outagamie	555	312	525
Clark	77	43	87	Ozaukee	246	135	243
Columbia	173	103	195	Pepin	22	10	14
Crawford	45	25	45	Pierce	106	59	110
Dane	1,352	663	1,202	Polk	140	76	143
Dodge	290	170	325	Portage	196	100	179
Door	85	41	71	Price	51	27	53
Douglas	146	83	143	Racine	523	297	560
Dunn	113	65	107	Richland	64	29	49
Eau Claire	309	176	317	Rock	533	308	573
Florence	18	9	17	Rusk	39	19	47
Fond du Lac	317	190	325	St. Croix	248	132	242
Forest	36	21	41	Sauk	202	108	195
Grant	132	78	144	Sawyer	64	34	64
Green	106	61	116	Shawano	133	79	161
Green Lake	49	25	51	Sheboygan	353	208	391
Iowa	71	41	76	Taylor	52	22	41
Iron	16	6	12	Trempealeau	91	56	108
Jackson	70	36	60	Vernon	89	55	97
Jefferson	292	153	282	Vilas	92	40	69
Juneau	101	55	92	Walworth	292	161	284
Kenosha	578	331	639	Washburn	59	19	34
Kewaunee	42	28	51	Washington	377	221	407
La Crosse	380	192	340	Waukesha	1,088	589	1,057
Lafayette	41	28	56	Waupaca	206	110	195
Langlade	60	42	77	Waushara	95	52	101
Lincoln	80	41	86	Winnebago	520	286	516
Manitowoc	229	133	250	Wood	237	131	233

Source: Bureau of Health Information and Policy, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Family Services.

Note: These numbers represent divorces and annulments that occurred in Wisconsin in 2004.

- Fifty-four percent of all Wisconsin divorces in 2004 involved couples with children under 18 years of age. Among divorces involving children, an average of 1.8 children were affected by each divorce.

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## Technical Notes

### Marriage Reporting Requirements

As specified in Chapter 69, Wisconsin Statutes, the following is a brief outline of the sequence of events which take place when a marriage occurs in Wisconsin:

- The filing party (officiant) must register the certificate of marriage with the local Register of Deeds (where the marriage took place) within 3 days after the event.
- The local Register of Deeds must transmit the marriage certificate to the State Registrar within 10 working days after its receipt.

### Divorce Reporting Requirements

As specified in Chapter 69, Wisconsin Statutes, the following is what takes place when a divorce occurs in Wisconsin:

- At the end of every biweekly period the filing party (clerk of any court) must send to the State Registrar a report of every divorce or annulment of marriage granted during that period. (This is the only legal document pertaining to vital records that is not filed by the local Register of Deeds.)