

# **Wisconsin Marriages and Divorces, 1996**

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Center for Health Statistics  
Division of Health  
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 1996. It also contains information from selected previous years, as well as information on the number and rates of marriages and divorces, both in Wisconsin and nationally. The source of these data is marriage and divorce certificates on file with the Center for Health Statistics.

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 stipulates how local registrars are to collect and file certificates of marriage. Copies of the marriage and divorce/annulment certificates are included in the Technical Notes.

The Center for Health Statistics would like to recognize and thank the local Register of Deeds offices for their accurate recording of all marriage records. The Department of Health and Family Services produced this publication. Staff of the Vital Records and Statistics Unit, Center for Health Statistics, collected and compiled the marriage and divorce records. Joyce Knapton drafted the brief summaries in this report and produced the computer programs to generate the tables. Ann Coker provided word processing and Jane Kraus supervised data collection activities.

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

Joyce Knapton  
Center for Health Statistics  
Division of Health  
P. O. Box 309, Room 145  
Madison, WI 53701-0309  
(608) 267-7815  
knaptj@dhfs.state.wi.us

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## Key Findings

- A total of 36,186 marriages occurred in Wisconsin in 1996, representing a slight decrease from the 36,354 marriages that occurred in 1995.
- Wisconsin's marriage rate in 1996 was 7.0 per 1,000 total population, continuing a gradual decline in this rate since the high of 8.7 marriages per 1,000 population in 1980.
- The marriage rate in Wisconsin has been consistently lower than the national rate for the past 75 years.
- From 1960 to 1996, the average age of brides and grooms marrying for the first time has gradually increased.
- Since 1960, the average bride in a first marriage has been approximately two years younger than the groom.
- In 1996, the months with the highest number of marriages were June, August and September. June was the most popular month to marry.
- Milwaukee County had the highest number of marriages in 1996 (5,742), followed by Dane County (2,742), Waukesha County (2,388), and Brown County (1,683).
- A total of 17,218 divorces and annulments occurred in Wisconsin in 1996, for a divorce rate of 3.3 per 1,000 total population. This represents the lowest rate recorded since 1975.
- The divorce and annulment rate in Wisconsin has been consistently lower than the national rate for the past 75 years.
- In 1996, the total number of Wisconsin divorces was approximately 48 percent of the total number of Wisconsin marriages.
- The highest number of divorces and annulments occurred in Milwaukee County (2,728), followed by Dane County (1,379) and Waukesha County (1,076), reflecting the large populations of these three counties.
- Approximately 59 percent of all Wisconsin divorces in 1996 involved families with children under 18 years of age. Among divorces involving families with children, an average of 1.9 children were affected by each divorce.

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## Overview of Tables and Figures

Data for 1996 and other relevant years are presented in two main sections: “Marriages” and “Divorces.” Technical Notes are included at the end of this report to better enable the reader to understand and utilize these data.

All tables and figures in this report present Wisconsin “occurrence” data (reflecting marriages and divorces that took place in Wisconsin).

**Marriages.** This section provides information on the number of marriages in Wisconsin, as well as the resulting marriage rates. Table 1 includes marriage rates for the nation.

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**Divorces and Annulments.** This section provides information on the number of divorces and annulments in Wisconsin, as well as the resulting divorce rates. Table 5 includes divorce rates for the nation.

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**Table 1. Marriages and Marriage Rates, 1920-1996**

<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
1991	37,765	7.6	9.4
1992	37,069	7.4	9.2
1993	36,415	7.2	9.0
1994	36,375	7.2	9.1
1995	36,354	7.1	8.9
1996	36,186	7.0	8.9

Notes: U.S. marriage rates are from the National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States*.

The Wisconsin numbers and rates reflect marriages that occurred in Wisconsin.

Rates shown are marriages per 1,000 total population.

The United States marriage rate for 1996 only covers January through September of that year.

- A total of 36,186 marriages occurred in Wisconsin in 1996, representing a slight decrease from the 36,354 marriages that occurred in 1995.
- Wisconsin's marriage rate in 1996 was 7.0 per 1,000 total population, continuing the gradual decline in this rate since the high of 8.7 marriages per 1,000 population in 1980.
- The marriage rate in Wisconsin has been consistently lower than the national rate for the past 75 years.

**Table 2. Median Age at First Marriage and Remarriage, 1960-1996**

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

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 1995 the median age for brides at first marriage was 24.5, meaning that half of all brides being married for the first time in 1995 were younger, and half were older, than 24.5. The numbers in this table reflect all marriages that occurred in Wisconsin in the stated years.

- Since 1960, the average age of brides and grooms marrying for the first time has gradually increased.
- Every year since 1960, the average bride in a first marriage has been approximately two years younger than the groom for every year shown in this table.

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## Marriages

**Table 3. Number of this Marriage by Age of Bride and Groom, 1996**

Age In Years	BRIDE					GROOM				
	Total Marriages	First	Second	Third	Fourth or More	Total Marriages	First	Second	Third	Fourth or More
	<b>36,186</b>	<b>24,939</b>	<b>9,037</b>	<b>1,832</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>36,186</b>	<b>25,520</b>	<b>8,768</b>	<b>1,634</b>	<b>264</b>
16	169	169				9	9			
17	208	208				34	34			
18	670	668	2			241	241			
19	1,062	1,055	7			495	495			
20	1,419	1,404	15			725	725			
21	1,779	1,747	32			1,217	1,210	7		
22	2,247	2,182	65			1,563	1,544	19		
23	2,551	2,446	104	1		1,971	1,933	38		
24	2,660	2,497	157	6		2,359	2,288	68	3	
25-29	9,758	8,098	1,546	106	8	10,930	9,924	987	19	
30-34	5,342	2,827	2,200	292	23	6,390	4,420	1,819	146	5
35-39	3,433	1,084	1,837	435	77	3,790	1,685	1,814	266	25
40-44	2,045	358	1,222	370	95	2,419	623	1,398	345	53
45-49	1,335	124	831	297	83	1,757	237	1,099	351	70
50-54	705	40	444	165	56	927	73	582	222	50
55-59	257	20	172	55	10	499	34	328	113	24
60-64	217	1	158	45	13	304	20	201	69	14
65-69	152	6	109	28	9	216	5	155	48	8
70-74	95	2	73	17	3	158	5	120	27	6
75+	76	1	61	13	1	169	6	129	25	9
Unknown	6	2	2	2		13	9	4		

Note: Totals shown represent marriages that occurred in Wisconsin in 1996.

- Women appear to remarry more often than men.
- In 1996, first-time grooms in Wisconsin outnumbered first-time brides by approximately 600.

## Marriages

**Table 4. Monthly Marriage Totals by County, 1996**

<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>36,186</b>	<b>1,161</b>	<b>1,512</b>	<b>1,693</b>	<b>2,156</b>	<b>3,622</b>	<b>5,281</b>	<b>3,491</b>	<b>4,982</b>	<b>4,459</b>	<b>3,822</b>	<b>2,142</b>	<b>1,865</b>
Adams	119	4	6	5	9	15	9	10	22	11	11	8	9
Ashland	165	2	4	8	10	20	23	18	26	16	21	9	8
Barron	349	18	22	12	12	28	65	27	49	38	36	24	18
Bayfield	125	2	2	3	3	17	19	21	20	19	5	9	5
Brown	1,683	49	45	67	107	181	238	161	233	216	203	100	83
Buffalo	76	3		2	6	8	15	5	8	9	13	3	4
Burnett	122	5	6	2	4	10	24	12	20	15	7	8	9
Calumet	140	3	3	5	11	19	28	9	18	18	16	4	6
Chippewa	410	10	11	18	21	37	70	41	56	49	48	27	22
Clark	249		9	14	11	20	39	30	42	34	26	13	11
Columbia	390	11	19	26	17	34	67	34	53	47	39	26	17
Crawford	122	1	7	4	6	12	27	19	16	13	7	3	7
Dane	2,742	114	123	121	154	279	402	264	391	320	269	146	159
Dodge	551	14	21	25	33	51	62	53	78	80	65	45	24
Door	357	12	11	12	10	32	58	34	57	54	45	16	16
Douglas	304	6	17	18	19	19	39	36	58	33	38	12	9
Dunn	222	10	5	11	11	18	28	18	30	26	35	14	16
Eau Claire	673	25	25	29	49	69	92	68	93	87	65	31	40
Florence	30		2	2	1	1	5	3	9	2	2	3	
Fond du Lac	702	18	27	43	39	74	122	74	89	76	75	33	32
Forest	80	3	1	3	7	8	12	9	10	13	9	4	1
Grant	310	6	9	15	13	32	39	30	44	46	39	20	17
Green	241	6	9	9	12	29	30	25	31	30	31	12	17
Green Lake	169	6	6	6	11	14	27	17	26	23	17	9	7
Iowa	177	6	7	3	8	14	30	11	23	37	20	13	5
Iron	60	3	5		2	5	7	12	9	5	4	5	3
Jackson	132	3	10	8	8	12	18	14	17	14	17	5	6
Jefferson	504	10	29	25	29	58	66	52	65	56	60	26	28
Juneau	176	6	11	7	9	22	20	22	18	21	16	14	10
Kenosha	875	29	41	37	61	79	126	93	108	114	96	45	46
Kewaunee	110	4	6	3	7	10	18	8	15	16	11	8	4
La Crosse	810	13	39	30	50	80	127	73	124	100	87	41	46
Lafayette	98	1	6	6	5	15	14	9	15	8	9	5	5
Langlade	153	6	3	8	7	7	26	15	24	18	18	7	14
Lincoln	242	3	15	6	24	17	39	28	31	31	25	12	11
Manitowoc	622	16	26	23	40	78	93	59	70	75	79	34	29
Marathon	878	24	29	37	57	92	123	103	121	103	95	52	42
Marinette	284	13	17	16	14	24	47	28	46	21	32	19	7
Marquette	78	4	3	5	4	9	13	7	10	9	8	3	3
Menominee	35	1	3	2	3		4	4	12	2	4		
Milwaukee	5,742	221	259	318	391	573	785	501	720	655	593	426	300
Monroe	296	10	11	11	22	31	35	30	38	30	36	23	19



## Marriages

**Table 4. Monthly Marriage Totals by County, 1996**

<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>
Oconto	224	4	10	11	11	20	28	30	33	30	23	7	17
Oneida	249	9	15	14	13	24	33	25	42	37	14	14	9
Outagamie	1,165	31	49	61	83	114	169	101	166	147	119	69	56
Ozaukee	556	22	19	25	24	54	83	59	77	74	49	38	32
Pepin	72	1	2	6	2	8	9	9	9	12	4	2	8
Pierce	206	8	12	10	14	18	25	18	30	30	21	14	6
Polk	289	5	15	14	16	19	50	24	41	42	41	9	13
Portage	415	22	15	17	26	46	52	43	64	44	46	13	27
Price	97	3	2	2	5	11	19	8	19	15	3	4	6
Racine	1,229	45	58	61	67	124	170	112	167	157	111	81	76
Richland	89	1	2	2	6	12	15	9	10	13	9	6	4
Rock	997	36	43	64	65	113	143	100	132	104	87	55	55
Rusk	107	8	4	3	9	8	14	13	10	16	10	5	7
St. Croix	405	16	17	15	26	31	63	34	59	61	44	20	19
Sauk	490	10	19	27	20	46	67	50	69	69	52	32	29
Sawyer	122	4	3	5	10	14	18	12	19	10	11	9	7
Shawano	251	12	9	6	15	29	34	22	31	30	35	16	12
Sheboygan	766	34	32	46	42	84	98	72	102	95	85	39	37
Taylor	128		5	9	8	10	21	11	24	16	15	3	6
Trempealeau	181	5	7	9	15	12	29	13	24	23	15	15	14
Vernon	197	3	7	4	10	15	30	19	29	34	23	15	8
Vilas	181	3	11	9	6	16	34	18	35	25	12	5	7
Walworth	724	19	29	42	37	80	108	67	84	107	73	42	36
Washburn	121	1	6	4	2	17	24	19	16	10	13	2	7
Washington	705	27	24	32	33	78	107	69	87	90	80	41	37
Waukesha	2,388	75	92	95	122	233	363	241	334	311	270	143	109
Waupaca	487	6	16	17	34	56	73	45	75	56	69	23	17
Waushara	139	3	10	7	13	14	27	10	10	14	14	9	8
Winnebago	1,014	27	45	49	58	106	148	101	151	128	90	57	54
Wood	589	20	24	22	47	57	96	50	88	69	52	37	27

Note: These numbers represent marriages that occurred in Wisconsin in 1996.

- In 1996, the months with the highest number of marriages were June, August and September. June was the most popular month to marry.
- Milwaukee County had the highest number of marriages in 1996 (5,742), followed by Dane County (2,742), Waukesha County (2,388), and Brown County (1,683). These counties were the four most populous counties in the state.
- The lowest number of marriages occurred in Florence (30) and Menominee (35) counties.

**Table 5. Divorces and Annulments and Rates, 1920-1996**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number in Wisconsin</u>	<u>Rate in Wisconsin</u>	<u>Rate in United States</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
1991	18,480	3.7	4.7
1992	18,487	3.7	4.8
1993	17,527	3.5	4.6
1994	17,569	3.5	4.6
1995	17,313	3.4	4.4
1996	17,218	3.3	4.4

Notes: U.S. divorce and annulment rates are from the National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States*. Rates are divorces and annulments per 1,000 total population. The Wisconsin numbers and rates represent divorces and annulments that occurred in Wisconsin. The United States divorce rate for 1996 only covers January through September.

- A total of 17,218 divorces and annulments occurred in Wisconsin in 1996, for a divorce rate of 3.3 per 1,000 population. This is the lowest statewide rate since 1975.
- The divorce and annulment rate in Wisconsin has been consistently lower than the national rate for the past 75 years.
- In 1996, the total number of Wisconsin divorces was approximately 48 percent of the total number of Wisconsin marriages.

## Divorces

**Table 6. Divorces and Annulments by County, 1996**

<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces</u>	<u>Annulments</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces</u>	<u>Annulments</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,185</b>	<b>33</b>			
Adams	79		Marathon	326	
Ashland	65		Marinette	155	
Barron	141		Marquette	54	
Bayfield	61		Menominee	1	
Brown	766		Milwaukee	2,721	7
Buffalo	37		Monroe	142	2
Burnett	50		Oconto	114	1
Calumet	109		Oneida	169	
Chippewa	180	1	Outagamie	519	1
Clark	75	1	Ozaukee	226	1
Columbia	179		Pepin	17	
Crawford	49		Pierce	113	
Dane	1,377	2	Polk	156	
Dodge	269	1	Portage	187	
Door	91		Price	59	
Douglas	165		Racine	530	
Dunn	112	1	Richland	58	
Eau Claire	339		Rock	657	1
Florence	23		Rusk	53	
Fond du Lac	312		St. Croix	163	
Forest	42		Sauk	207	
Grant	125		Sawyer	65	
Green	134	1	Shawano	116	
Green Lake	66		Sheboygan	385	
Iowa	62		Taylor	62	
Iron	25		Trempealeau	68	
Jackson	63		Vernon	70	1
Jefferson	293		Vilas	78	1
Juneau	79	1	Walworth	328	
Kenosha	560	2	Washburn	59	
Kewaunee	34		Washington	341	1
La Crosse	337		Waukesha	1,074	2
Lafayette	49		Waupaca	218	3
Langlade	66		Waushara	77	
Lincoln	120		Winnebago	548	1
Manitowoc	273		Wood	262	1

Note: These numbers represent divorces and annulments that occurred in Wisconsin in 1996.

- The highest number of divorces and annulments occurred in Milwaukee County (2,728), followed by Dane County (1,379) and Waukesha County (1,076).
- The lowest number of divorces and annulments occurred in the counties of Menominee (1), Pepin (17), and Florence (23).

## Divorces

**Table 7. Divorces Affecting Children Under 18 Years of Age by County, 1996**

<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces Granted</u>	<u>Those With Children &lt; 18</u>	<u>No. of Children Affected</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces Granted</u>	<u>Those With Children &lt; 18</u>	<u>No. of Children Affected</u>
<b>State Total</b>	<b>17,218</b>	<b>10,143</b>	<b>18,879</b>				
Adams	79	47	86	Marathon	326	209	385
Ashland	65	35	64	Marinette	155	81	146
Barron	141	86	149	Marquette	54	31	47
Bayfield	61	37	67	Menominee	1	0	0
Brown	766	455	869	Milwaukee	2,728	1,491	2,783
Buffalo	37	24	36	Monroe	144	91	175
Burnett	50	32	63	Oconto	115	76	142
Calumet	109	72	145	Oneida	169	103	193
Chippewa	181	112	234	Outagamie	520	326	622
Clark	76	53	112	Ozaukee	227	123	225
Columbia	179	100	198	Pepin	17	14	28
Crawford	49	35	67	Pierce	113	65	119
Dane	1,379	738	1,350	Polk	156	91	185
Dodge	270	152	286	Portage	187	115	233
Door	91	55	99	Price	59	30	45
Douglas	165	90	164	Racine	530	307	547
Dunn	113	70	137	Richland	58	32	61
Eau Claire	339	213	383	Rock	658	405	757
Florence	23	14	33	Rusk	53	26	57
Fond du Lac	312	192	355	St. Croix	163	109	195
Forest	42	25	52	Sauk	207	132	251
Grant	125	85	170	Sawyer	65	44	84
Green	135	79	146	Shawano	116	77	157
Green Lake	66	42	70	Sheboygan	385	250	461
Iowa	62	38	78	Taylor	62	45	90
Iron	25	14	26	Trempealeau	68	47	91
Jackson	63	39	74	Vernon	71	41	80
Jefferson	293	187	340	Vilas	79	49	91
Juneau	80	48	89	Walworth	328	204	359
Kenosha	562	327	565	Washburn	59	41	86
Kewaunee	34	18	39	Washington	342	205	380
La Crosse	337	202	363	Waukesha	1,076	579	1,069
Lafayette	49	31	55	Waupaca	221	129	237
Langlade	66	42	79	Waushara	77	47	92
Lincoln	120	89	172	Winnebago	549	310	561
Manitowoc	273	172	324	Wood	263	168	306

Note: These numbers represent divorces and annulments that occurred in Wisconsin in 1996.

- Approximately 59 percent of all Wisconsin divorces granted in 1996 involved families with children under 18 years of age. Among divorces involving families with children, an average of 1.9 children were affected by each divorce.

**Marriage Reporting Requirements:**

As specified in Wisconsin State Statute 69, 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 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.

Marriage Certificate:

A copy of a sample marriage certificate form can be found on page 16.

**Divorce Reporting Requirements:**

As specified in Wisconsin State Statute 69, the following is a brief outline of the sequence of events which take 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.)

Divorce Certificate:

A copy of a sample divorce certificate form can be found on page 17.



