

# **Wisconsin Marriages and Divorces, 1998**

July 1999

Bureau of Health Information  
Division of Health Care Financing  
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 1998. 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 these data are marriage and divorce certificates on file with the Division of Health Care Financing, Bureau of Health Information.

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. Samples of the marriage and divorce certificates are included in the Technical Notes.

The Bureau of Health Information would like to 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 Registration and Statistics Unit, Bureau of Health Information, 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, and Jane Kraus supervised data collection activities.

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## Key Findings

- A total of 34,946 marriages occurred in Wisconsin in 1998, representing a slight decrease from the 35,546 marriages that occurred in 1997.
- Wisconsin's marriage rate in 1998 was 6.7 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 more than 75 years.
- From 1960 to 1998, the median age of brides and grooms marrying for the first time has gradually increased, although it remained the same for the past two years. In 1960, the average age was 20.4 for brides and 22.9 for grooms, while in 1998 it was 24.6 for brides and 26.3 for grooms.
- Since 1960, the average bride in a first marriage has been approximately two years younger than the groom.
- In 1998, the months with the highest number of marriages were June, August and September. For the second consecutive year, August was the most popular month to marry.
- Milwaukee County had the highest number of marriages in 1998 (5,467), followed by Dane County (2,602), Waukesha County (2,377), and Brown County (1,651). These counties are Wisconsin's four most populous counties.
- A total of 17,484 divorces occurred in Wisconsin in 1998, for a divorce rate of 3.3 per 1,000 total population. This is identical to the 1997 rate, which was the lowest statewide rate since 1975.
- The divorce rate in Wisconsin has been consistently lower than the national rate for more than 75 years.
- In 1998, the total number of Wisconsin divorces was 50 percent of the total number of Wisconsin marriages. This is up one percentage point from 1997.
- The highest number of divorces occurred in Milwaukee County (2,840 divorces and 12 annulments), followed by Dane County (1,246 divorces and 5 annulments) and Waukesha County (1,125 divorces and 1 annulment), reflecting the large populations of these three counties.
- Fifty-six percent of all Wisconsin divorces in 1998 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 1998 and other relevant years are presented in two main sections: “Marriages” and “Divorces.” Technical Notes are included at the end of this report to help the reader understand and use 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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**Table 1. Marriages and Marriage Rates, 1920-1998**

<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
1997	35,546	6.8	8.9
1998	34,946	6.7	8.2

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

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 1997 is provisional based on marriages that occurred in January through December of that year.

The United States marriage rate for 1998 is provisional based on marriages that occurred in January through August of that year.

- A total of 34,946 marriages occurred in Wisconsin in 1998, representing a slight decrease from the 35,546 marriages that occurred in 1997.
- Wisconsin's marriage rate in 1998 was 6.7 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 more than 75 years.

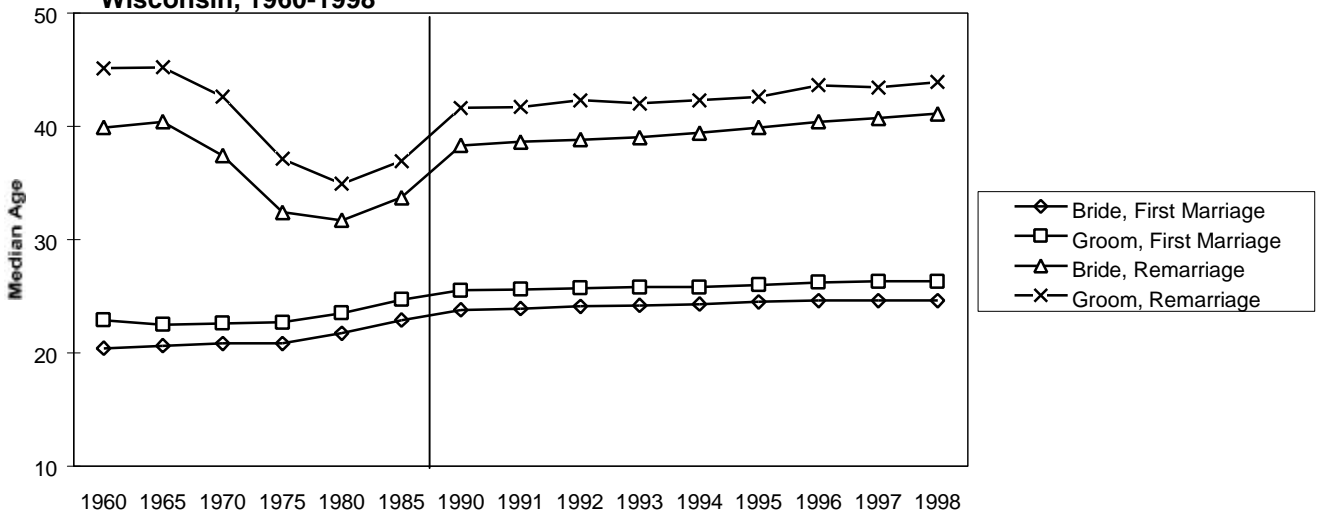
**Table 2. Median Age at First Marriage and All Remarriages, 1960-1998**

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

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.

- From 1960 to 1998, the median age of brides and grooms marrying for the first time has gradually increased, but it remained the same for the past two years. In 1960, the average age was 20.4 for brides and 22.9 for grooms, while in 1998 it was 24.6 and 26.3, respectively.
- Since 1960, the average bride in a first marriage has been approximately two years younger than the groom.

**Figure 1. Median Age at First Marriage and All Remarriages, Wisconsin, 1960-1998**



## Marriages

**Table 3. Number of This Marriage by Age of Bride and Groom, 1998**

Age in Years	BRIDE					GROOM				
	Total Marriages	First	Second	Third	Fourth or More	Total Marriages	First	Second	Third	Fourth or More
	<b>34,946</b>	<b>24,076</b>	<b>8,628</b>	<b>1,847</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>34,946</b>	<b>24,420</b>	<b>8,559</b>	<b>1,669</b>	<b>298</b>
16	181	181				11	11			
17	180	179				37	37			
18	664	662	1	2		225	225			
19	974	969		5		502	501	1		
20	1,325	1,308	17			702	700	2		
21	1,751	1,729	22			1,083	1,078	5		
22	2,148	2,099	46	3		1,490	1,474	16		
23	2,505	2,408	95	2		1,950	1,918	31		
24	2,442	2,285	151	6		2,172	2,124	46	2	1
25-29	9,328	7,800	1,447	78	3	10,133	9,215	889	28	1
30-34	4,843	2,723	1,850	245	25	6,108	4,259	1,725	114	10
35-39	3,455	1,138	1,859	391	67	3,884	1,808	1,770	269	37
40-44	2,139	377	1,264	393	105	2,514	687	1,425	347	55
45-49	1,395	146	839	320	90	1,667	216	1,029	358	64
50-54	705	38	436	183	48	1,010	98	618	239	55
55-59	368	15	239	88	26	574	24	378	142	30
60-64	228	11	137	67	13	355	26	219	87	23
65-69	160	4	111	36	9	224	8	168	33	15
70-74	84	2	59	16	7	168	8	132	26	2
75+	71	2	48	19	2	137	3	105	24	5

Note: Totals shown represent marriages that occurred in Wisconsin in 1998.

- Looking at the number of brides marrying more than once versus the number of grooms remarrying, it appears women remarry more often than men.
- In 1998, first-time grooms in Wisconsin outnumbered first-time brides by more than 300.



## Marriages

**Table 4. Monthly Marriage Totals by County, 1998**

<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>34,946</b>	<b>1,166</b>	<b>1,682</b>	<b>1,455</b>	<b>1,973</b>	<b>3,803</b>	<b>4,422</b>	<b>3,527</b>	<b>5,075</b>	<b>4,326</b>	<b>4,195</b>	<b>1,761</b>	<b>1,561</b>
Adams	123	6	1	6	9	14	18	9	22	19	10	4	5
Ashland	135	4	6	9	5	16	19	13	16	16	12	10	9
Barron	310	10	13	12	19	39	41	33	54	33	33	8	15
Bayfield	120	1	6	7	3	8	15	16	25	13	16	5	5
Brown	1,651	61	79	61	94	182	211	172	250	223	190	67	61
Buffalo	94	3	7	5	6	13	11	9	12	11	11	4	2
Burnett	116	4	5	5	5	12	20	18	12	15	13	4	3
Calumet	179	3	6	7	10	23	24	13	20	29	26	7	11
Chippewa	422	16	26	16	23	37	55	35	64	61	59	17	13
Clark	192	5	4	8	10	17	26	22	34	25	29	7	5
Columbia	350	9	30	10	20	38	51	35	49	46	30	15	17
Crawford	135	1	5	4	9	10	29	17	23	14	11	5	7
Dane	2,602	87	124	108	160	301	318	235	399	303	322	123	122
Dodge	551	16	30	27	32	65	81	47	74	57	59	40	23
Door	371	9	17	14	10	30	56	45	50	58	53	18	11
Douglas	291	8	17	14	10	24	30	41	55	33	28	17	14
Dunn	224	8	10	10	14	23	31	17	43	24	26	8	10
Eau Claire	615	25	27	26	41	78	70	55	91	67	76	30	29
Florence	26		1	3	1	1	8	4	7	1			
Fond du Lac	740	35	31	36	39	88	87	86	94	101	81	37	25
Forest	62		4	1	6	3	5	6	12	9	11	2	3
Grant	306	2	10	5	23	33	44	30	50	38	39	18	14
Green	213	3	13	14	10	20	30	18	26	26	30	6	17
Green Lake	155	7	7	4	7	15	22	18	25	23	15	8	4
Iowa	198	5	9	8	5	21	42	23	24	22	28	5	6
Iron	50	2	2	3	1	5	10	6	7	6	4	2	2
Jackson	127	6	9	7	6	15	16	13	16	16	13	9	1
Jefferson	513	23	31	22	25	55	63	43	58	65	72	29	27
Juneau	172	4	10	7	13	17	25	10	31	20	20	11	4
Kenosha	883	35	55	45	57	90	95	92	123	113	86	41	51
Kewaunee	133	4	6	4	5	16	15	15	18	12	22	11	5
La Crosse	765	24	24	30	48	87	87	82	130	95	82	34	42
Lafayette	76	2	5	2	5	8	6	6	10	10	9	6	7
Langlade	149	6	6	7	7	14	23	19	18	22	16	5	6
Lincoln	227	5	6	5	20	17	42	27	30	31	24	9	11
Manitowoc	571	17	20	17	31	63	74	69	93	60	74	36	17
Marathon	841	31	34	26	33	97	103	85	134	120	103	36	39
Marinette	281	9	13	9	14	25	36	35	56	28	30	13	13
Marquette	95	1	3	3	6	8	10	14	16	12	11	2	9
Menominee	43		1	3	1	4	2	2	10	7	8	4	1
Milwaukee	5,467	242	260	273	347	595	651	533	733	609	641	333	250
Monroe	286	10	20	11	16	35	30	33	37	33	38	11	12

## Marriages

**Table 4. Monthly Marriage Totals by County, 1998**

<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	186	11	10	12	9	11	27	16	28	17	28	10	7
Oneida	250	4	10	4	14	24	31	38	42	35	27	10	11
Outagamie	1,187	36	66	57	59	130	161	119	159	139	145	61	55
Ozaukee	513	12	23	19	19	52	62	60	81	75	58	22	30
Pepin	56	1	1	3	5	2	8	4	12	11	6	2	1
Pierce	193	6	5	7	7	23	20	17	36	31	25	11	5
Polk	277	10	11	15	15	23	35	22	44	35	36	12	19
Portage	417	9	22	14	17	55	65	38	61	48	53	19	16
Price	123	3	4	3	9	15	17	10	19	15	12	13	3
Racine	1,036	36	62	50	51	106	132	109	160	124	96	62	48
Richland	120	1	5	8	11	20	14	12	15	20	9	5	5
Rock	1,024	40	63	43	65	124	140	94	118	123	123	49	42
Rusk	128	1	6	7	4	11	28	16	16	16	13	4	6
St. Croix	402	21	16	14	20	42	58	34	65	51	47	18	16
Sauk	442	3	23	17	19	59	49	41	50	58	72	21	30
Sawyer	128	4	7	4	5	9	14	16	18	21	16	7	7
Shawano	233	7	14	8	15	27	32	18	25	34	34	14	5
Sheboygan	787	32	33	31	50	75	94	83	104	87	115	44	39
Taylor	159	2	10	6	12	25	24	16	19	18	12	9	6
Trempealeau	153	1	6	7	9	15	19	14	32	20	14	12	4
Vernon	181	3	6	9	6	13	27	18	29	27	25	7	11
Vilas	151	3	7	5	7	10	21	23	24	25	15	5	6
Walworth	720	19	46	24	39	70	91	63	95	114	104	31	24
Washburn	112	3	7	5	9	13	12	8	16	15	11	5	8
Washington	684	12	23	31	36	81	80	84	103	95	92	23	24
Waukesha	2,377	76	103	77	137	276	254	244	358	309	308	135	100
Waupaca	471	12	24	19	25	52	66	50	67	51	58	20	27
Waushara	108	3	5	5	6	7	18	9	17	17	13	2	6
Winnebago	917	31	51	40	59	119	117	83	137	105	89	37	49
Wood	551	15	20	25	31	61	68	65	77	69	67	30	23

Note: These numbers represent marriages that occurred in Wisconsin in 1998.

- In 1998, the months with the highest number of marriages were June, August and September. For the second consecutive year, August was the most popular month to marry.
- Milwaukee County had the highest number of marriages in 1998 (5,467), followed by Dane County (2,602), Waukesha County (2,377), and Brown County (1,651). These are Wisconsin's four most populous counties.
- The lowest number of marriages occurred in the counties of Florence (26) and Menominee (43).

**Table 5. Divorces and Rates, 1920-1998**

<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
1997	17,289	3.3	4.3
1998	17,484	3.3	3.5

Notes: All divorce numbers and rates in this publication for Wisconsin and the U.S. include annulments.

U.S. divorce rates are from the National Center for Health Statistics, *National Vital Statistics Reports*.

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 1997 is provisional based on divorces that occurred in January through December of that year.

The United States divorce rate for 1998 is provisional based on divorces that occurred in January through August of that year.

- A total of 17,484 divorces occurred in Wisconsin in 1998, for a divorce rate of 3.3 per 1,000 population. This is identical to the 1997 rate, which was the lowest statewide rate since 1975.
- The divorce rate in Wisconsin has been consistently lower than the national rate for more than 75 years.
- In 1998, the total number of Wisconsin divorces was 50 percent of the total number of Wisconsin marriages. This is up one percentage point from 1997.

## Divorces

**Table 6. Divorces and Annulments by County, 1998**

<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces</u>	<u>Annulments</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces</u>	<u>Annulments</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,425</b>	<b>59</b>			
Adams	87	1	Marathon	381	
Ashland	71		Marinette	138	
Barron	170		Marquette	59	
Bayfield	66	1	Menominee	1	
Brown	770	2	Milwaukee	2,840	12
Buffalo	44		Monroe	170	
Burnett	50	1	Oconto	145	
Calumet	94		Oneida	186	1
Chippewa	159	1	Outagamie	533	1
Clark	85	1	Ozaukee	245	1
Columbia	185	2	Pepin	15	
Crawford	64		Pierce	123	1
Dane	1,246	5	Polk	142	
Dodge	275		Portage	199	
Door	96		Price	53	
Douglas	159	1	Racine	492	1
Dunn	123	1	Richland	51	
Eau Claire	310	4	Rock	671	2
Florence	16		Rusk	47	
Fond du Lac	282		St. Croix	217	
Forest	39		Sauk	198	
Grant	141	1	Sawyer	77	1
Green	128	1	Shawano	125	
Green Lake	75		Sheboygan	361	1
Iowa	68	1	Taylor	64	2
Iron	32		Trempealeau	90	
Jackson	70		Vernon	65	1
Jefferson	246		Vilas	97	
Juneau	73		Walworth	354	
Kenosha	522	3	Washburn	38	
Kewaunee	48		Washington	354	1
La Crosse	325	2	Waukesha	1,125	1
Lafayette	46		Waupaca	201	1
Langlade	81		Waushara	100	
Lincoln	106		Winnebago	571	1
Manitowoc	294	2	Wood	251	1

Note: These numbers represent divorces and annulments that occurred in Wisconsin in 1998.

- The highest total number of divorces occurred in Milwaukee County (2,840 divorces and 12 annulments), followed by Dane County (1,246 divorces and 5 annulments) and Waukesha County (1,125 divorces and 1 annulment), reflecting the large populations of these three counties.
- The lowest total number of divorces occurred in the counties of Menominee (1 divorce), Pepin (15 divorces), and Florence (16 divorces).

## Divorces

**Table 7. Divorces Affecting Children Under 18 Years of Age by County, 1998**

County	Divorces Granted	Those With Children < 18	No. of Children <18 Affected	County	Divorces Granted	Those With Children < 18	No. of Children <18 Affected
<b>State Total</b>	<b>17,484</b>	<b>9,835</b>	<b>18,214</b>				
Adams	88	51	94	Marathon	381	206	355
Ashland	71	44	94	Marinette	138	86	164
Barron	170	111	211	Marquette	59	38	64
Bayfield	67	40	76	Menominee	1	1	3
Brown	772	433	795	Milwaukee	2,852	1,437	2,658
Buffalo	44	27	52	Monroe	170	105	192
Burnett	51	32	62	Oconto	145	85	167
Calumet	94	63	135	Oneida	187	104	202
Chippewa	160	95	193	Outagamie	534	315	584
Clark	86	61	107	Ozaukee	246	142	270
Columbia	187	98	163	Pepin	15	9	16
Crawford	64	46	92	Pierce	124	73	130
Dane	1,251	628	1,070	Polk	142	90	178
Dodge	275	176	334	Portage	199	108	196
Door	96	61	107	Price	53	34	66
Douglas	160	84	161	Racine	493	272	500
Dunn	124	63	113	Richland	51	33	70
Eau Claire	314	176	346	Rock	673	394	736
Florence	16	10	16	Rusk	47	30	64
Fond du Lac	282	160	263	St. Croix	217	147	283
Forest	39	23	48	Sauk	198	121	217
Grant	142	86	168	Sawyer	78	44	94
Green	129	72	139	Shawano	125	71	126
Green Lake	75	48	98	Sheboygan	362	210	375
Iowa	69	41	79	Taylor	66	37	82
Iron	32	18	30	Trempealeau	90	53	106
Jackson	70	42	75	Vernon	66	38	70
Jefferson	246	141	254	Vilas	97	56	115
Juneau	73	47	105	Walworth	354	211	359
Kenosha	525	310	554	Washburn	38	24	40
Kewaunee	48	33	75	Washington	355	224	421
La Crosse	327	180	341	Waukesha	1,126	582	1,057
Lafayette	46	34	69	Waupaca	202	115	227
Langlade	81	52	112	Waushara	100	63	115
Lincoln	106	59	110	Winnebago	572	323	590
Manitowoc	296	166	297	Wood	252	143	284

Note: These numbers represent divorces and annulments that occurred in Wisconsin in 1998.

- Fifty-six percent of all Wisconsin divorces in 1998 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 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 sample divorce certificate form can be found on page 17.



