

Marriage Rates in the United States, 1900–2018

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Studies have shown that adults in the United States are increasingly postponing marriage, and that a record number of current youth and young adults are projected to forego marriage altogether (1,2). Marriage has been shown to be correlated with positive health outcomes and longevity (3), and a recent report showed that age-adjusted death rates for both males and females are lowest for those who were married at the time of death (4).

Data on the number of marriages have been continuously collected and published in various reports from the federal government since 1867, with information from 1946 to the present collected through the National Center for Health Statistics' (NCHS) National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) (5,6). The marriage rate per 1,000 population has been computed each year using the number of marriages and population data from the U.S. Census Bureau. This report focuses on marriage rates from 1900 through 2018.

Much variation can be seen in marriage rates over the 1900–2018 period, with the most pronounced fluctuations occurring during the 1930s and 1940s, at the time of the Great Depression and World War II (Figure, Table). Marriage rates ranged between 9.3 (per 1,000 population) and 12.0 from 1900 to 1929 and then declined to a relative low of 7.9 in 1932. The marriage rate more than doubled between 1932 and 1946 when it reached an all-time high of 16.4, and then it generally declined to 8.4 in 1958 and stabilized at 8.5 during 1959–1962.

Marriage rates increased beginning in 1963, reaching a relative peak of 10.9 in 1972. The rate then fell to 9.9 during 1976 and 1977 before increasing to 10.6 in 1980–1982. From 1982 to 2009, marriage rates almost steadily declined, before stabilizing from 2009 to 2017 at a range between 6.8 and 7.0.

From 2017 to 2018, the rate dropped 6%, from 6.9 per 1,000 population to 6.5, the lowest of the 1900–2018 period.

Data source and methods

A history of the collection of marriage statistics is detailed elsewhere (5,6). The numbers and rates shown in this report are based on previously published reports (5) and, more recently, on annual counts of marriages tabulated by NCHS through NVSS, available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/marriage-divorce.htm>.

Counts of marriage licenses are collected locally and then reported to NVSS through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program (6). Not all states are represented for each year of data: Marriages

in Alaska were included beginning in 1959 and those in Hawaii beginning in 1960, while marriages in California were excluded in 1991, those in Louisiana excluded in 2006, and those in Georgia excluded in 2013 and 2014. For those years in which a state did not report its marriage counts, its population counts are excluded from the denominator.

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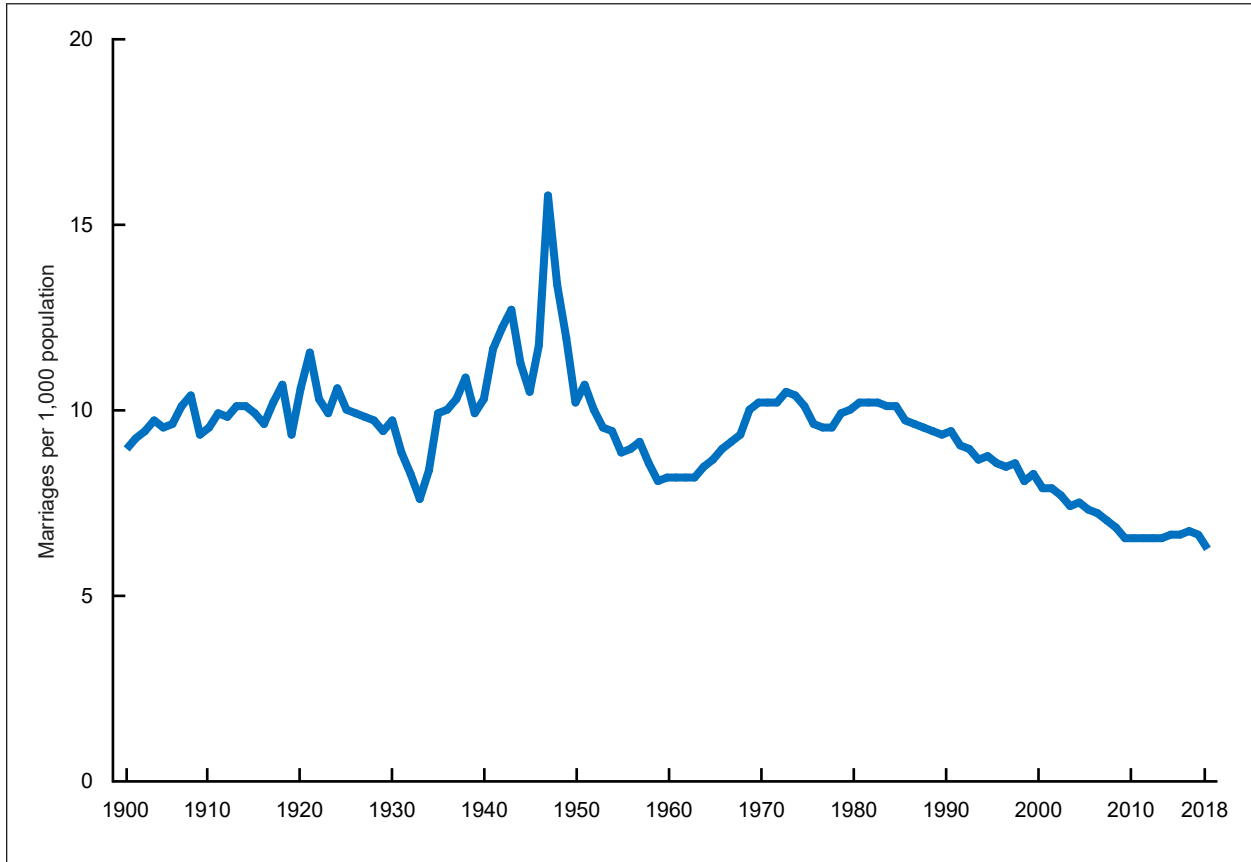
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Figure. Marriage rates: United States, 1900–2018



NOTES: Rates are per 1,000 population. Alaska was included beginning in 1959, and Hawaii beginning in 1960. California was excluded in 1991, Louisiana in 2006, and Georgia in 2013 and 2014.
SOURCE: NCHS, National Vital Statistics System, Marriage.

Table. Marriage numbers and rates: United States, 1900–2018

Year	Number	Rate	Year	Number	Rate
1900	709,000	9.3	1960	1,523,000	8.5
1901	742,000	9.6	1961	1,548,000	8.5
1902	776,000	9.8	1962	1,577,000	8.5
1903	818,000	10.1	1963	1,654,000	8.8
1904	815,000	9.9	1964	1,725,000	9.0
1905	842,000	10.0	1965	1,800,000	9.3
1906	895,000	10.5	1966	1,857,000	9.5
1907	937,000	10.8	1967	1,927,000	9.7
1908	857,000	9.7	1968	2,069,000	10.4
1909	897,000	9.9	1969	2,145,000	10.6
1910	948,000	10.3	1970	2,159,000	10.6
1911	955,000	10.2	1971	2,190,000	10.6
1912	1,005,000	10.5	1972	2,282,000	10.9
1913	1,021,000	10.5	1973	2,284,000	10.8
1914	1,025,000	10.3	1974	2,230,000	10.5
1915	1,008,000	10.0	1975	2,153,000	10.0
1916	1,076,000	10.6	1976	2,155,000	9.9
1917	1,144,000	11.1	1977	2,178,000	9.9
1918	1,000,000	9.7	1978	2,282,000	10.3
1919	1,150,000	11.0	1979	2,331,000	10.4
1920	1,274,000	12.0	1980	2,390,000	10.6
1921	1,164,000	10.7	1981	2,422,000	10.6
1922	1,134,000	10.3	1982	2,456,000	10.6
1923	1,230,000	11.0	1983	2,446,000	10.5
1924	1,185,000	10.4	1984	2,477,000	10.5
1925	1,188,000	10.3	1985	2,413,000	10.1
1926	1,203,000	10.2	1986	2,407,000	10.0
1927	1,201,000	10.1	1987	2,403,000	9.9
1928	1,182,000	9.8	1988	2,396,000	9.8
1929	1,233,000	10.1	1989	2,403,000	9.7
1930	1,127,000	9.2	1990	2,443,000	9.8
1931	1,061,000	8.6	1991	2,371,000	9.4
1932	982,000	7.9	1992	2,362,000	9.3
1933	1,098,000	8.7	1993	2,334,000	9.0
1934	1,302,000	10.3	1994	2,362,000	9.1
1935	1,327,000	10.4	1995	2,366,000	8.9
1936	1,369,000	10.7	1996	2,344,000	8.8
1937	1,451,000	11.3	1997	2,384,000	8.9
1938	1,331,000	10.3	1998	2,244,000	8.4
1939	1,404,000	10.7	1999	2,358,000	8.6
1940	1,596,000	12.1	2000	2,315,000	8.2
1941	1,696,000	12.7	2001	2,326,000	8.2
1942	1,772,000	13.2	2002	2,290,000	8.0
1943	1,577,000	11.7	2003	2,245,000	7.7
1944	1,452,000	10.9	2004	2,279,000	7.8
1945	1,613,000	12.2	2005	2,249,000	7.6
1946	2,291,000	16.4	2006	2,193,000	7.5
1947	1,992,000	13.9	2007	2,197,000	7.3
1948	1,811,000	12.4	2008	2,157,000	7.1
1949	1,580,000	10.6	2009	2,080,000	6.8
1950	1,667,000	11.1	2010	2,096,000	6.8
1951	1,595,000	10.4	2011	2,118,000	6.8
1952	1,539,000	9.9	2012	2,131,000	6.8
1953	1,546,000	9.8	2013	2,081,301	6.8
1954	1,490,000	9.2	2014	2,140,272	6.9
1955	1,531,000	9.3	2015	2,221,579	6.9
1956	1,585,000	9.5	2016	2,251,411	7.0
1957	1,518,000	8.9	2017	2,236,496	6.9
1958	1,451,000	8.4	2018	2,132,853	6.5
1959	1,494,000	8.5			

NOTES: Rates are per 1,000 population. Alaska was included beginning in 1959, and Hawaii beginning in 1960. California was excluded in 1991, Louisiana in 2006, and Georgia in 2013 and 2014.

SOURCE: NCHS, National Vital Statistics System, Marriage.