



## STATISTICAL SPOTLIGHT: MARRIAGE & DIVORCE

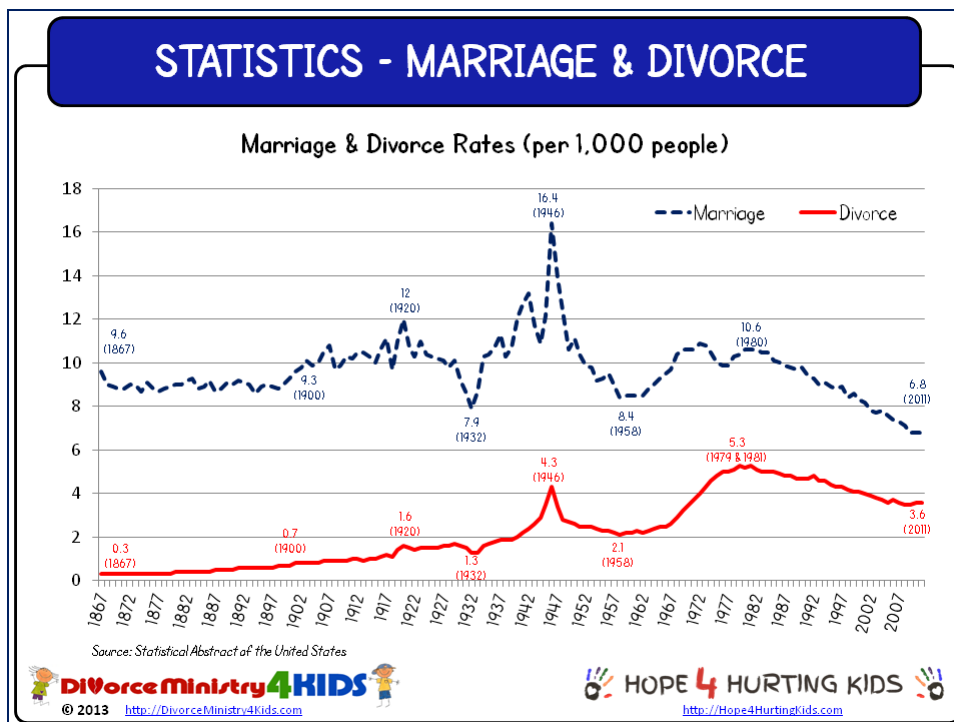
By Wayne D. Stocks

January 28, 2014

Some of the very first articles published on [DivorceMinistry4Kids.com](http://DivorceMinistry4Kids.com) included statistics on marriage and divorce and the impact on children. Over the years we have featured a number of articles including more detailed statistics related to the impacts of divorce and child living arrangements. This past November 2013, we presented a workshop at the Engage Conference in Mechanicsburg Pennsylvania entitled "This Ain't Your Grandmas' Children's Ministry: Understanding Modern Families." The premise of the workshop was that in order to understand the kids who come into your churches every Sunday morning, you need to understand how their families are changed. We gathered a lot more information than we were able to share in a one hour workshop, and over the next couple of months we will share a variety of statistics and study results related to children and the types of families they live in. Our sincere hope is that, armed with this information, the perception of the children in your ministry will change and you will be better able to minister to children from today's diverse modern families.

This week, we are going to look at various charts and statistics related to marriage and divorce. You may be surprised by the current trends.

### Current Marriage and Divorce Rates



As you can see from this first chart the marriage and divorce rate in the United States has been decreasing about 1980. In 1979 and 1981, the divorce rate in the United States peaked at 5.3 divorces per 1,000 people. In 2011, the rate was 3.6 per 1,000 people (a decrease of over 30%). This is due in large part to the associated decrease in marriage rates and the increase in cohabitations (which dissolve at a much higher rate than marriages). This measure is known as the crude divorce rate.





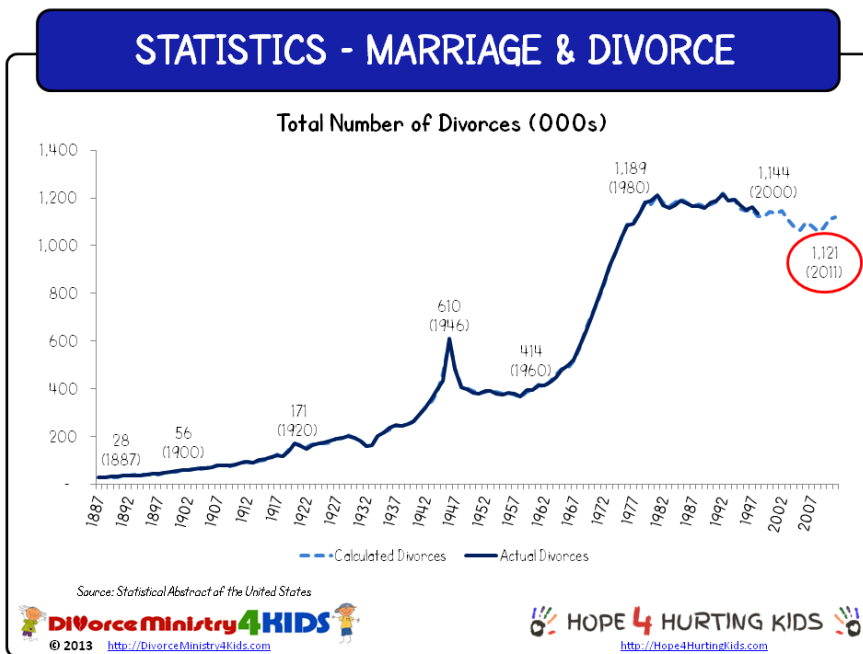
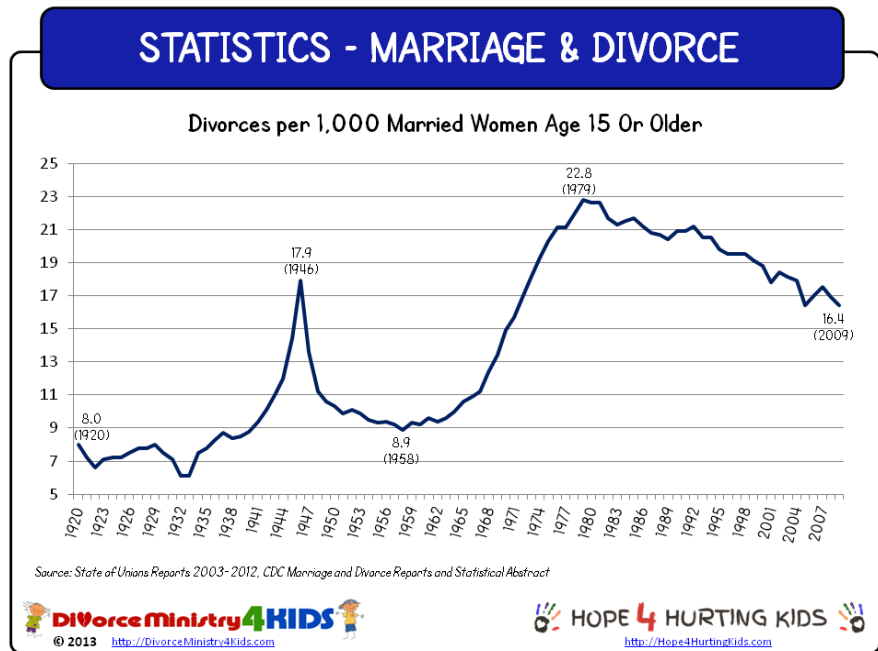
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A similar, but more accurate measure of divorces in the number of divorces per 1,000 women aged 15 and older. This chart (shown below) indicates that in 1979, there were 22.8 divorces per 1,000 women aged 15 and older. In 2009, that number was 16.4 per 1,000. This decrease is slightly less than 30%.

This next chart shows the change in total number of divorces. So, while the rate of divorce has actually decreased over the last 30 years, the number of divorces has remained fairly consistent. The number of divorces peaked in 1982 at around 1.2 million divorces. We estimate that there were about 1.1 million divorces in 2011.



This estimation is necessary because some states opted to no longer report annual numbers of divorces to the federal government beginning in 1996. In 1974, the United States officially switched to having more marriage end in divorce than ended by the death of one of a husband or wife. The number of divorces has been over 1 million each year since 1975. Lest you lull yourself into thinking this is a problem only outside the church, the divorce rate of evangelical and born-again adults is statistically equivalent to that of non born-again adults.





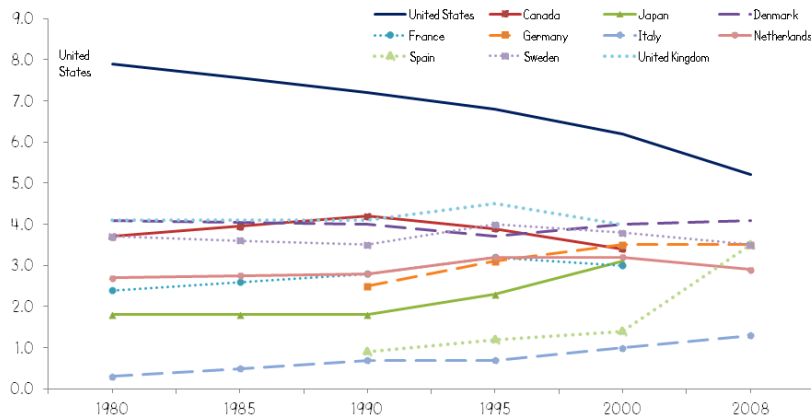
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### STATISTICS - MARRIAGE & DIVORCE

Comparison of U.S. Divorce Rate to Other Nations



Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States



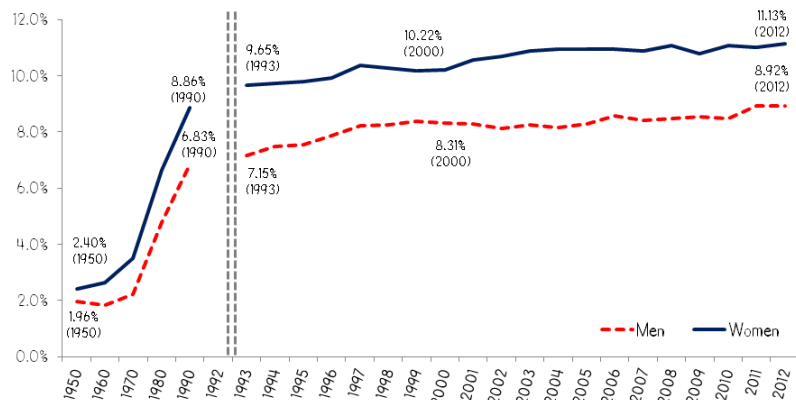
In the United States, we tend to pride ourselves on being a world leader on a variety of fronts. Unfortunately, divorce is amongst those things the U.S. consistently leads the world in. In fact, the U.S. leads this tragic race by a convincing margin. The rates quoted in this chart represent the number of divorces per 1,000 people aged 15 to 64. The U.S. also leads the developed world in the percentage of women (about 10%) who have had 3 or more marriages, divorces or cohabiting relationships by the age of 35. The next closest nation is Sweden at 4.5%.

Turning from rates of divorce to the percentage of the population currently divorced. This chart shows that approximately 10% of the total population of the United States was divorced in 2012 (11.13% of all women and 8.92% of all men). This represents a significant increase since 1980 when 6.64% of women and 4.8% of men were divorced.

This only represents the percentage of the population currently divorced. Given the rate of remarriage this is not an accurate representation of the number of people who have ever been divorced. For that we turn to another chart.

### STATISTICS - MARRIAGE & DIVORCE

Percentage of Male and Female Population Currently Divorced



Source: Current Population Survey - Time Series MS1





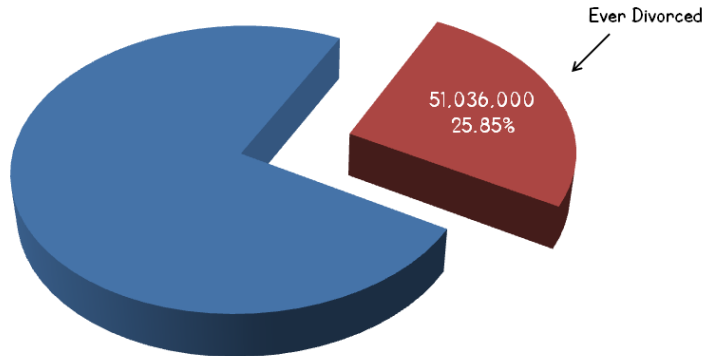
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### STATISTICS - MARRIAGE & DIVORCE

Ever Divorced Men & Women Aged 25 and Up  
(197 Million Total)



Source: Number, Timing and Duration of Marriages (2009)



In 2009, there were about 197 million men and women in the United States aged 20 and up. Of those, about 51 million had ever been divorced. Approximately 26%. That means, that one in every four people you meet over the age of 24 has been a participant in a divorce. Add in the number who have lived with someone outside of marriage and had that relationship dissolve, and the number is likely much much higher.

This particular statistic, while useful, does have one issue. It does not accurately reflect the volatility of marriage as it reflects the percentage of ALL people

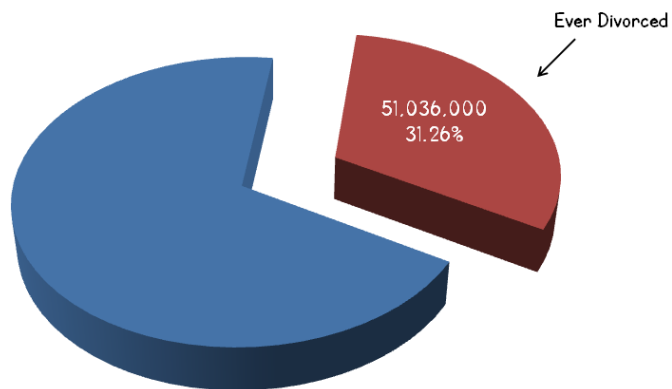
who have ever been divorced. If we are looking for a measure of the volatility of marriage, a better measure is presented in this next graph.

Of the 192 million people in the United States aged 25 and up, about 163 million of them have ever been married. That means, with 51 million experiencing a divorce that about 31% of all people who have ever been married have also been divorced.

You may be familiar with the widely cited statistics that 50% of marriages end in divorce and be wondering how that can be true if only 31% of all people who have ever been married have also been divorced. Although there is much discussion about whether

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Ever Divorced Men & Women Aged 25 and Up as a % of Ever Married  
(163 Million Total)



Source: Number, Timing and Duration of Marriages (2009)



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or not the oft cited 50% figure is accurate, given that divorce rates for second and third marriages are even higher than those for first marriages and that many divorcees are likely to remarry, it seems likely that it is an accurate overall measure.