

2008

Wisconsin
Marriages
and Divorces

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

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April 2009

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Introduction

This report presents key information about marriages and divorces that occurred in Wisconsin in 2008. 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 Services.

The collection of marriage and divorce data is mandated by Chapter 69 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Chapter 69 authorizes the Department of Health 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 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. Patricia Guhleman, Director, Bureau of Health Information and Policy, provided overall direction.

The Bureau of Health Information and Policy would like to thank the County Clerks and Clerks of Tribal Court for issuing accurate marriage licenses, the local Register of Deeds offices for their accurate recording of all marriage records, and the County Clerks of Court and Clerks of Tribal Court for their timely filing of completed divorce or annulment certificates.

This report is available on the Department of Health Services Web site, at <http://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 31,444 marriages occurred in Wisconsin in 2008, representing a decrease of 715 from the 32,159 marriages that occurred in 2007. These counts reflect all marriages that occurred in Wisconsin (of both residents and non-residents of the state).
- The number of marriages has been declining annually since 1980.
- Wisconsin's marriage rate in 2008 was 5.6 per 1,000 total population, lower than the 2007 rate (5.7). 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 12 months ending in July 2008 was 7.1 per 1,000 population.
- The median age for first marriages in 2008 was 25.3 years for women and 26.8 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 a year or two younger than the groom.
- In 2008, the months with the highest number of marriages were June, August and September. August was the most popular month to marry.
- Milwaukee County had the highest number of marriages in 2008 (4,378), followed by Dane County (2,642), Waukesha County (1,947) and Brown County (1,534). These are Wisconsin's four most populous counties. Of these four counties, Milwaukee and Waukesha had a decrease in the number of marriages from 2007 to 2008.
- A total of 16,885 divorces occurred in Wisconsin in 2008, for a divorce rate of 3.0 per 1,000 total population. This is slightly higher than the 2007 rate (2.9).
- In 2008, the ratio of Wisconsin marriages to Wisconsin divorces was 1.9 to 1 (there were 1.9 marriages for each divorce). This ratio has been falling since 1920, when it was 9.2 to 1; it was 6.7 to 1 in 1960; 2.2 to 1 in 1990; and 2.1 to 1 in 2000.
- The highest number of divorces in 2008 occurred in Milwaukee County (2,432 divorces and 11 annulments), followed by Dane County (1,391 divorces and 4 annulments) and Waukesha County (1,014 divorces and 2 annulments), reflecting the large populations of these three counties.
- Fifty-three percent of all Wisconsin divorces in 2008 involved families with children under 18 years of age. Among divorces involving children, an average of 1.8 children were affected by each divorce.

Table 1. Marriages and Marriage Rates, Wisconsin and United States, Selected Years, 1920-2008

<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	7.7
2004	34,056	6.2	7.8
2005	33,876	6.1	7.5
2006	33,437	6.0	7.3
2007	32,159	5.7	7.3
2008	31,444	5.6	7.1

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 Services. The Wisconsin marriage rate for 2008 was calculated using 2007 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 2007 is provisional based on marriages that occurred in the 12 months ending in December, 2007. The U.S. marriage rate for 2008 is provisional based on marriages occurring in the 12 months ending in July, 2008.

- A total of 31,444 marriages occurred in Wisconsin in 2008, representing a decrease of 715 from the 32,159 marriages that occurred in 2007.
- The number of marriages has been declining annually since 1980.
- Wisconsin's marriage rate in 2008 was 5.6 per 1,000 total population, lower than the 2007 rate (5.7). 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 1960-2008

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
2005	25.0	26.4	44.4	47.1
2006	25.1	26.6	44.6	47.2
2007	25.2	26.8	45.1	47.6
2008	25.3	26.8	45.2	48.0

Source: Bureau of Health Information and Policy, Division of Public Health, Department of Health 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 2005 the median age for brides at first marriage was 25.0, meaning that half of all brides being married for the first time in 2005 were younger, and half were older, than 25.0. The numbers in this table reflect all marriages that occurred in Wisconsin in the stated years.

- The median age for first marriages in 2008 was 25.3 years for women and 26.8 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 a year or two younger than the groom.

Marriages

Table 3. Marriages and Remarriages by Age of Bride and Groom, Wisconsin 2008

Age in Years	Bride					Groom				
	Total Marriages	First	Second	Third	Fourth or More	Total Marriages	First	Second	Third	Fourth or More
	31,444	23,060	6,572	1,494	318	31,444	23,048	6,697	1,437	262
16	67	67				4	4			
17	103	103				14	14			
18	435	434	1			160	159			
19	668	667	1			333	333			
20	915	914	1			489	488	1		
21	1,279	1,269	10			861	856	5		
22	1,828	1,805	23			1,238	1,231	7		
23	2,300	2,244	55	1		1,675	1,646	29		
24	2,436	2,357	79			1,982	1,943	38	1	
25-29	9,473	8,581	856	36		9,680	9,163	503	14	
30-34	3,978	2,727	1,143	95	13	5,118	4,079	984	54	1
35-39	2,402	1,006	1,147	221	28	2,991	1,648	1,164	168	11
40-44	1,805	423	1,022	291	69	2,115	759	1,087	234	35
45-49	1,588	259	945	309	75	1,763	395	1,015	299	54
50-54	1,036	127	605	257	47	1,307	206	773	274	54
55-59	551	54	312	141	44	800	87	492	171	50
60-64	295	13	166	87	29	441	26	255	123	37
65-69	128	4	92	26	6	211	5	145	53	8
70-74	74	3	52	16	3	133	3	99	23	8
75+	83	3	62	14	4	129	3	99	23	4

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

Note: Totals shown represent marriages that occurred in Wisconsin in 2008.

- For first-time brides and grooms, the highest number of marriages occurred between the ages of 22 and 29.

Marriages

Table 4. Monthly Marriage Totals by County, Wisconsin 2008

<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>
State Total	31,444	1,046	1,287	1,203	1,737	3,150	4,234	3,194	4,958	3,884	3,626	1,583	1,542
Adams	124	7	4	4	6	13	19	9	17	19	10	8	8
Ashland	138	5	6	2	9	8	15	19	27	24	11	6	6
Barron	319	12	14	7	15	29	45	34	55	46	39	12	11
Bayfield	144	1	4	1	7	7	16	23	39	23	12	5	6
Brown	1,534	55	48	58	87	178	184	158	230	186	194	79	77
Buffalo	64	1	2	3	1	9	8	6	10	13	5	1	5
Burnett	83	7	5	3	6	6	12	4	15	9	12	4	
Calumet	194	3	10	9	9	12	34	19	28	22	33	13	2
Chippewa	361	12	12	12	19	46	44	31	63	44	38	17	23
Clark	228	6	11	11	19	19	32	13	26	38	33	8	12
Columbia	452	12	17	20	32	57	57	40	71	54	59	14	19
Crawford	102	5	5	4	5	14	16	7	13	10	13	5	5
Dane	2,642	102	104	133	139	290	357	269	423	306	263	135	121
Dodge	423	13	20	20	34	54	52	37	58	46	54	19	16
Door	416	9	14	9	4	50	66	45	74	62	53	20	10
Douglas	246	12	9	7	14	16	30	23	48	25	32	9	21
Dunn	217	13	5	20	10	22	36	20	29	24	14	14	10
Eau Claire	641	20	28	21	37	76	88	45	118	74	69	26	39
Florence	17	3			1		1	4		3	3	1	1
Fond du Lac	521	17	20	17	39	56	73	43	68	68	64	26	30
Forest	49	1	3		2	6	8	5	4	12	6	2	
Grant	267	5	6	6	18	29	32	26	44	32	36	19	14
Green	159	2	8	6	12	13	24	15	22	20	14	11	12
Green Lake	137	3	4	5	8	16	20	17	20	15	18	11	
Iowa	178	2	6	2	14	10	29	22	37	18	30	4	4
Iron	33	1	2	2	1	1	7		10	2	5	1	1
Jackson	112	4	7	4	10	9	15	10	20	16	11	3	3
Jefferson	440	20	30	19	21	43	60	46	54	57	51	17	22
Juneau	159	2	7	5	6	18	22	17	21	9	25	10	17
Kenosha	727	28	37	26	43	61	92	85	130	85	62	38	40
Kewaunee	96	3	1	1	3	9	8	15	18	17	14	4	3
La Crosse	749	16	33	27	34	67	114	86	123	91	84	43	31
Lafayette	105	1		3	5	15	11	9	21	13	18	5	4
Langlade	104	4	5	6	2	7	10	15	24	14	11	1	5
Lincoln	159	1	7	5	9	7	21	18	28	21	21	13	8
Manitowoc	502	21	18	18	18	49	75	53	86	61	54	19	30
Marathon	798	23	29	35	48	80	106	76	137	115	79	31	39
Marinette	242	11	5	10	7	29	43	33	35	25	24	12	8
Marquette	83	1	4	2	4	12	18	9	7	11	8	2	5
Menominee	33		3	2	2	3	5	5	4	2	5	2	
Milwaukee	4,378	177	209	190	302	406	545	439	650	493	474	279	214
Monroe	288	6	14	12	23	31	40	28	30	25	41	18	20

Marriages

Table 4. Monthly Marriage Totals by County, Wisconsin 2008

<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	181	4	6	4	10	8	25	10	37	31	28	11	7
Oneida	265	6	9	10	19	31	38	27	52	28	25	6	14
Outagamie	1,180	54	51	45	82	104	148	117	161	130	165	71	52
Ozaukee	386	8	8	9	16	31	52	52	74	49	49	16	22
Pepin	40	2	2	1	2	4	4	4	8	3	5	2	3
Pierce	197	6	12	4	14	25	26	14	36	21	22	6	11
Polk	254	6	19	9	16	20	36	30	37	37	22	14	8
Portage	369	16	17	9	22	45	56	34	65	43	39	13	10
Price	74	3		3	5	6	12	6	16	11	9	1	2
Racine	830	29	34	33	38	81	104	84	124	112	103	37	51
Richland	124	4	6	5	5	10	13	13	18	23	15	5	7
Rock	804	26	37	28	42	91	114	102	108	78	88	43	47
Rusk	94	2		2	6	8	12	9	21	14	13	4	3
St. Croix	371	11	12	21	25	35	43	37	58	52	37	14	26
Sauk	477	24	21	24	13	45	61	40	59	63	71	28	28
Sawyer	126	3	4	4	4	13	17	17	30	9	11	6	8
Shawano	236	8	12	9	12	18	35	23	35	28	31	8	17
Sheboygan	765	20	32	26	38	73	98	74	132	103	82	49	38
Taylor	136	2	1	2	10	15	27	9	20	18	18	4	10
Trempealeau	172	7	8	7	8	24	32	12	20	23	18	5	8
Vernon	176	3	11	4	5	22	24	21	26	21	22	11	6
Vilas	152	4	5	6		13	25	14	28	30	13	4	10
Walworth	808	14	26	26	32	85	128	88	131	96	107	43	32
Washburn	119	6	5	4	6	14	11	13	22	14	11	5	8
Washington	637	17	29	22	38	63	88	57	88	99	81	34	21
Waukesha	1,947	62	59	66	95	204	275	206	309	257	231	90	93
Waupaca	367	9	15	17	11	40	49	37	66	49	45	13	16
Waushara	159	6	3	2	8	16	17	17	30	21	24	7	8
Winnebago	896	26	43	33	45	83	116	105	137	131	81	51	45
Wood	438	11	24	21	25	40	58	44	73	40	58	15	29

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

Note: These numbers represent marriages that occurred in Wisconsin in 2008.

- In 2008, the months with the highest number of marriages were June, August and September. August was the most popular month to marry.
- Milwaukee County had the highest number of marriages in 2008 (4,378), followed by Dane County (2,642), Waukesha County (1,947) and Brown County (1,534). These are Wisconsin's four most populous counties.
- The lowest number of marriages occurred in the counties of Florence (17), Menominee (33), Iron (33) and Pepin (40).

Table 5. Divorces and Divorce Rates, Wisconsin and United States, Selected Years, 1920-2008

<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	3.0	3.7
2005	16,297	2.9	3.6
2006	16,730	3.0	3.6
2007	16,458	2.9	3.6
2008	16,885	3.0	3.5

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 Services. The Wisconsin divorce rate for 2008 was calculated using 2007 population figures.

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

Notes: Wisconsin numbers and rates represent divorces and annulments occurring in Wisconsin. The U.S. divorce rate for 2007 is provisional based on divorces that occurred in the 12 months ending in December, 2007. The U.S. divorce rate for 2008 is provisional based on divorces that occurred in the 12 months ending in July, 2008.

- A total of 16,885 divorces occurred in Wisconsin in 2008, for a divorce rate of 3.0 per 1,000 population. This is slightly higher than the 2007 rate (2.9).
- In 2008, the ratio of Wisconsin marriages to Wisconsin divorces was 1.9 to 1 (there were 1.9 marriages for each divorce). This ratio has been falling since 1920, when it was 9.2 to 1; it was 6.7 to 1 in 1960; 2.2 to 1 in 1990; and 2.1 to 1 in 2000.

Divorces

Table 6. Divorces and Annulments by County, Wisconsin 2008

<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces</u>	<u>Annulments</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces</u>	<u>Annulments</u>
Total	16,856	29			
Adams	90		Marathon	390	
Ashland	45		Marinette	125	
Barron	151		Marquette	48	1
Bayfield	59		Menominee	1	
Brown	827	1	Milwaukee	2,432	11
Buffalo	42		Monroe	173	1
Burnett	48		Oconto	122	
Calumet	141		Oneida	145	1
Chippewa	193	1	Outagamie	624	1
Clark	89		Ozaukee	180	
Columbia	170		Pepin	18	
Crawford	38		Pierce	110	
Dane	1,391	4	Polk	124	
Dodge	314		Portage	196	
Door	75		Price	53	
Douglas	140		Racine	538	
Dunn	126		Richland	56	
Eau Claire	289		Rock	549	
Florence	17		Rusk	52	
Fond du Lac	280		St. Croix	325	
Forest	30		Sauk	225	
Grant	122		Sawyer	61	
Green	108		Shawano	108	
Green Lake	57		Sheboygan	330	
Iowa	77		Taylor	54	
Iron	27		Trempealeau	91	
Jackson	51	1	Vernon	75	
Jefferson	290	1	Vilas	84	
Juneau	97		Walworth	327	
Kenosha	502	3	Washburn	39	
Kewaunee	62		Washington	369	
La Crosse	301		Waukesha	1,014	2
Lafayette	49		Waupaca	188	
Langlade	79		Waushara	92	
Lincoln	72		Winnebago	558	
Manitowoc	267		Wood	264	1

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

Note: These numbers represent divorces and annulments that occurred in Wisconsin in 2008.

- The highest number of divorces occurred in Milwaukee County (2,432 divorces and 11 annulments), followed by Dane County (1,391 divorces and 4 annulments) and Waukesha County (1,014 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), Florence (17 divorces) and Pepin (18 divorces).

Divorces

Table 7. Divorces Affecting Children Under 18 Years of Age by County, Wisconsin 2008

<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces Granted</u>	<u>Those Affecting Children < 18</u>	<u>No. of Children < 18 Affected</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Divorces Granted</u>	<u>Those Affecting Children < 18</u>	<u>No. of Children < 18 Affected</u>
State Total	16,885	8,950	16,490				
Adams	90	45	78	Marathon	390	226	433
Ashland	45	25	48	Marinette	125	70	124
Barron	151	74	141	Marquette	49	20	34
Bayfield	59	33	63	Menominee	1	1	1
Brown	828	451	849	Milwaukee	2,443	1,213	2,242
Buffalo	42	21	42	Monroe	174	100	184
Burnett	48	24	44	Oconto	122	59	111
Calumet	141	92	172	Oneida	146	58	101
Chippewa	194	124	233	Outagamie	625	340	611
Clark	89	49	84	Ozaukee	180	100	175
Columbia	170	90	149	Pepin	18	10	21
Crawford	38	26	52	Pierce	110	59	114
Dane	1,395	677	1,192	Polk	124	70	145
Dodge	314	172	318	Portage	196	108	192
Door	75	36	61	Price	53	28	55
Douglas	140	75	139	Racine	538	288	564
Dunn	126	67	122	Richland	56	31	55
Eau Claire	289	156	279	Rock	549	303	576
Florence	17	10	18	Rusk	52	25	45
Fond du Lac	280	145	260	St. Croix	325	182	349
Forest	30	19	32	Sauk	225	109	199
Grant	122	72	138	Sawyer	61	28	50
Green	108	59	113	Shawano	108	70	145
Green Lake	57	33	64	Sheboygan	330	170	344
Iowa	77	37	69	Taylor	54	25	57
Iron	27	13	17	Trempealeau	91	56	103
Jackson	52	30	51	Vernon	75	40	79
Jefferson	291	171	322	Vilas	84	35	64
Juneau	97	41	82	Walworth	327	185	356
Kenosha	505	278	479	Washburn	39	12	19
Kewaunee	62	29	63	Washington	369	212	391
La Crosse	301	156	283	Waukesha	1,016	539	958
Lafayette	49	25	50	Waupaca	188	110	190
Langlade	79	43	73	Waushara	92	51	87
Lincoln	72	32	64	Winnebago	558	291	524
Manitowoc	267	159	283	Wood	265	137	265

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

Note: These numbers represent divorces and annulments that occurred in Wisconsin in 2008.

- Fifty-three percent of all Wisconsin divorces in 2008 involved couples with children under 18 years of age. Among divorces involving children, an average of 1.8 children were affected by each divorce.

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.

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Wisconsin Marriages and Divorces, 2008

P-45359-08 (April 2009)

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