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Part 2 : Divorce Statistics - Australia, 1951

The following tables relating to divorce, nullity of marriage, and judicial separation, have been prepared by the Social Services Branch of the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics from statistics compiled by the Government Statistician of each State and returns received from Judicial Authorities in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. They relate, in the main, to the year 1951, but summarized figures for earlier years have been added for purposes of comparison.

The number of petitions for divorce, nullity of marriage and judicial separations in 1951 was the highest since 1947, but the peak year was 1946 when 9,915 petitions were lodged.

Table V : Number of Petitions for Divorce, etc. - States, 1951.

State or Territory	Petitions for -						Total Petitions		
	Divorce		Nullity of Marriage		Judicial Separation		Husband Petitioner	Wife Petitioner	Total
	Husband Petitioner	Wife Petitioner	Husband Petitioner	Wife Petitioner	Husband Petitioner	Wife Petitioner			
New South Wales	1,710	2,334	9	22	1	28	1,720	2,384	4,104
Victoria	803	1,016	8	7	-	6	811	1,029	1,840
Queensland	(a)350	(a)363	-	-	-	-	350	363	713
South Australia	327	425	-	-	-	-	327	425	812
Western Australia	377	351	2	2	3	-	382	353	735
Tasmania	125	126	-	-	-	-	125	126	251
Northern Territory	12	4	-	-	-	-	12	4	16
Australian Capital Territory	23	9	-	-	-	-	23	9	32
Australia:	3,727	4,698	19	31	4	34	3,750	4,753	8,503
1950	3,717	4,622	23	40	1	26	3,741	4,688	8,429
1949	3,882	4,456	28	37	1	29	3,911	4,524	8,435
1948	3,927	4,280	26	37	2	26	3,955	4,343	8,298
1947	4,430	4,381	23	45	-	19	4,453	4,445	8,898

(a) Includes all petitions.

The increase in divorce in Australia since 1930 is illustrated in the following table which shows that during this period the number of decrees of divorce and nullity of marriage together with judicial separations increased from 1,805 to 7,327, an increase of 5,522 or 30.6 per cent. The increase during the war years was particularly rapid.

Table VI : Divorces and Judicial Separations Granted : Australia, 1930-1951

Year	Divorces (a)	Judicial Separations	Total	Year	Divorces (a)	Judicial Separations	Total
1930	1,794	11	1,805	1941	3,330	18	3,348
1931	1,948	7	1,955	1942	3,575	9	3,584
1932	1,680	17	1,697	1943	4,624	7	4,691
1933	1,948	29	1,977	1944	5,687	11	5,698
1934	2,292	15	2,297	1945	7,216	16	7,232
1935	2,401	23	2,424	1946	7,226	12	7,238
1936	2,502	16	2,518	1947	8,802	13	8,815
1937	2,785	17	2,802	1948	7,243	12	7,255
1938	3,100	13	3,113	1949	6,622	8	6,630
1939	3,145	13	3,158	1950	7,414	11	7,425
1940	3,255	21	3,266	1951	7,320	7	7,327

(a) Including nullity of marriage.

The number of decrees granted in Australia during 1951 was 7,327 or 17 per cent. lower than the peak year 1947 when 8,815 decrees were granted. The decline in decrees granted from the year 1947 in the various States was 25 per cent in Victoria, 20 per cent. in Queensland, 16 per cent in Western Australia, 13 per cent. in New South Wales, 9 per cent. in South Australia and 8 per cent. in Tasmania.

Table VII : Divorces etc. : Number of Decrees Granted : States, 1951

State or Territory	Divorces made Absolute		Nullity of Marriage		Judicial Separation		Total Decrees		
	Husband Petitioner	Wife Petitioner	Husband Petitioner	Wife Petitioner	Husband Petitioner	Wife Petitioner	Husband Petitioner	Wife Petitioner	Total
New South Wales	1,451	1,852	7	18	-	4	1,458	1,874	3,332
Victoria	760	954	8	7	-	1	768	962	1,730
Queensland	344	357	3	3	-	1	347	361	708
South Australia	268	369	2	2	1	-	271	371	642
Western Australia	326	356	1	-	-	-	327	356	683
Tasmania	109	85	-	-	-	-	109	85	194
Northern Territory	5	8	-	-	-	-	5	8	13
Australian Capital Territory	13	12	-	-	-	-	13	12	25
Australia:	3,276	3,993	21	30	1	6	3,298	4,029	7,327
1950	3,494	3,864	21	35	1	10	3,516	3,909	7,425
1949	3,128	3,428	16	30	-	8	3,144	3,486	6,630
1948	3,717	3,769	25	32	1	11	3,743	3,512	7,255
1947	4,583	4,133	37	49	2	11	4,622	4,193	8,815

The following table shows decrees made absolute in 1951, classified according to the legal duration of marriage in conjunction with issue. It will be seen that in the case of 44 per cent. of divorces finalized in 1951 the marriage had been celebrated within the previous 10 years. Of the couples divorced in 1951, 34 per cent. had no issue, 32 per cent. had one child, 20 per cent. had two children, 8 per cent. had three children, and 6 per cent. had four or more children.

Table VIII : Divorces : Duration of Marriage and Issue : Australia, 1951.

Duration of Marriage	Number of Divorces where Issue to the Marriage was -							Total Divorces		Total Issue
	0	1	2	3	4	5 and over	Not stated	Number	per cent.	
Under 5 years	427	187	20	1	-	-	1	636	9	230
5 - 9 "	1,114	970	351	61	7	3	2	2,508	35	1,898
10 - 14 "	495	553	435	140	52	23	-	1,698	23	2,175
15 - 19 "	198	306	264	135	55	39	-	1,007	14	1,713
20 - 29 "	173	268	291	179	98	103	-	1,102	15	2,337
30 years and over	55	45	59	48	45	65	-	317	4	899
Not Stated	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Total Divorces	2,463	2,329	1,420	574	247	233	3	7,269	-	-
Per cent.	34	32	20	8	3	3	-	-	100	-
Total Issue	-	2,329	2,840	1,722	988	1,375	-	-	-	9,252
(Total Divorces)	2,696	2,344	1,326	512	237	213	-	7,358	-	-
Per cent.	37	32	18	7	3	3	-	-	100	-
(Total Issue)	-	2,344	2,652	1,626	948	1,259	-	-	-	8,829
(Total Divorces)	2,576	1,955	1,144	493	216	189	3	6,576	-	-
Per cent.	39	30	17	8	3	3	-	-	100	-
(Total Issue)	-	1,955	2,288	1,479	864	1,140	-	-	-	7,726
(Total Divorces)	2,799	2,170	1,244	542	221	209	1	7,106	-	-
Per cent.	39	30	17	8	3	3	-	-	100	-
(Total Issue)	-	2,170	2,488	1,626	884	1,244	-	-	-	8,412
(Total Divorces)	3,409	2,600	1,535	649	298	232	3	8,716	-	-
Per cent.	39	30	18	7	3	3	-	-	100	-
(Total Issue)	-	2,600	3,070	1,977	1,152	1,401	-	-	-	10,170

NOTE : Excludes Nullity of Marriage.

The following table shows the number of divorced husbands and wives in each age group at the time of the divorce being made absolute. In 1951 the incidence was the highest in the 30-34 group which comprised 21 per cent. of the husbands and 22 per cent. of the wives. This incidence obtained during the period 1947 to 1951 for husbands, but in the years 1948 and 1949 for wives the highest incidence was in the 25-29 age group.

Table IX : Divorces : Age of Husband and Wife at the time of Divorce : Australia, 1951.

Age of Husband	Age of Wife (Years)							Total Not Stated	Total Husbands
	Under 25	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-54	55 and over		
Under 25 Years	118	35	1	3	-	-	-	-	157
25 - 29 "	317	642	106	15	-	-	-	2	1,085
30 - 34 "	71	649	654	118	16	4	-	1	1,513
35 - 39 "	21	183	614	529	87	17	1	-	1,449
40 - 44 "	6	49	172	489	386	88	2	3	1,195
45 - 54 "	-	15	72	194	391	596	36	2	1,306
55 Years and over	-	2	2	14	18	237	219	-	522
Not Stated	1	1	1	-	1	1	-	37	42
Total Wives	534	1,578	1,622	1,362	930	940	258	45	7,269

Ages of Wives at time of Divorce : Total Wives

Year -	Under 25	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-54	55 and over	Not Stated	Total
1951	534	1,578	1,622	1,362	930	940	258	45	7,269
1950	479	1,679	1,681	1,374	930	913	278	24	7,358
1949	453	1,529	1,485	1,279	756	813	239	22	6,576
1948	565	1,718	1,580	1,325	884	830	257	27	7,186
1947	747	2,072	2,134	1,566	967	923	267	40	8,716

(iii)

Ages of Husbands at time of Divorce : Total Husbands

Year	Under 25	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-54	55 and over	Not Stated	Total
1951	157	1,085	1,513	1,199	1,195	1,306	522	42	7,269
1950	152	1,123	1,546	1,509	1,172	1,314	510	22	7,358
1949	126	969	1,077	1,309	1,020	1,152	481	22	6,576
1948	157	1,142	1,534	1,284	1,112	1,211	487	29	7,186
1947	195	1,361	2,108	1,804	1,331	1,357	539	41	8,716

NOTE : Excludes Nullity of Marriage.

The grounds for divorce vary in each State, a notable instance being that insanity is not a ground for divorce in New South Wales.

Of the divorces made absolute, the main grounds were desertion and adultery. The percentages for desertion were 74 per cent. in Queensland, Tasmania and New South Wales (the latter includes desertion - non-compliance with decrees for restitution of conjugal rights), 72 per cent. in Victoria, 58 per cent. (including separation for over 5 years) in Western Australia, and 49 per cent. (including separation for over 5 years) in South Australia, while for adultery the percentages were 37 per cent. in South Australia and Western Australia, 25 per cent. in Victoria and Queensland, 24 per cent. in Tasmania and 20 per cent. in New South Wales.

Table X : Grounds on which Divorce Absolute, Nullity of Marriage and Judicial Separation were Granted : States, 1951.

Grounds on which Granted	N.S.W.			VIC.			Q'LD.			S.A.			W.A.		TAS.	N.T.	A.C.T.	AUSTRALIA		
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	(b)	(c)
Adultery	652	-	2	420	-	-	173	-	-	234	-	1	250	-	46	3	6	1,784	-	3
Adultery and Desertion	-	-	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	16	-	-
Desertion	2,457	-	2	1,241	-	1	521	-	-	304	-	-	201	-	144	9	16	4,893	-	3
Bigamy	-	16	-	-	5	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	24	-
Cruelty	59	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	1	74	-	-	1	-	-	1	3	142	-	1
Cruelty and Drunkenness	71	-	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	1	-	-	91	-	-
Drunkenness	48	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	65	-	-
Impotency	-	8	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	21	-
Non-Consummation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-
Separation for over 5 years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	194	-	-	-	-	201	-	-
Maintenance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	22	-	-	-	-	21	-	-
Gaol for Crime	15	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	22	-	-
Insanity	-	-	-	9	-	-	5	-	-	6	-	-	3	-	2	-	-	25	-	-
Other	1	1	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	5	1	-
Total:	3,303	25	4	1,714	15	1	701	6	1	637	4	1	682	1	194	13	25	7,269	51	7

(a) Divorce Absolute. (b) Nullity of Marriage. (c) Judicial Separation.

Table XI : Grounds on which Divorce Absolute, Nullity of Marriage and Judicial Separation were Granted : Australia, Years 1947 to 1951.

Grounds on which Granted	1947.			1948.			1949.			1950.			1951.		
	Divorce	Nullity	Judicial Separation	Divorce	Nullity	Judicial Separation	Divorce	Nullity	Judicial Separation	Divorce	Nullity	Judicial Separation	Divorce	Nullity	Judicial Separation
Adultery	3,155	-	7	2,191	-	7	1,720	-	3	1,792	-	3	1,784	-	3
Adultery and Desertion	54	-	-	35	-	-	41	-	2	25	-	-	16	-	-
Desertion	5,022	-	2	4,477	-	1	4,423	-	3	5,051	-	4	4,893	-	3
Bigamy	4	40	-	3	26	1	3	18	-	-	25	-	-	24	-
Cruelty	71	-	-	85	-	2	113	-	-	119	-	4	142	-	1
Cruelty and Drunkenness	80	-	-	78	-	-	55	-	-	85	-	-	91	-	-
Drunkenness	28	-	-	35	-	-	43	-	-	36	-	-	65	-	-
Impotency	1	43	-	1	29	-	-	25	-	1	27	-	1	21	-
Non-Consummation	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	5	-
Separation for over 5 years	203	-	-	207	-	-	119	-	-	173	-	-	201	-	-
Maintenance	20	-	-	19	-	-	13	-	-	25	-	-	21	-	-
Gaol for Crime	15	-	-	17	-	-	12	-	-	16	-	-	22	-	-
Insanity	41	-	-	33	-	-	27	-	-	29	-	-	25	-	-
Other	22	-	2	5	1	1	4	3	-	6	-	-	5	1	-
Total:	8,716	86	13	7,186	57	12	6,576	46	8	7,358	56	11	7,269	51	7