

**Wyoming Department of Health
Report to the Governor**

Vital Statistics Services - 2017 Annual Report - W.S. § 35-1-404(a)(v)

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Section 1. Executive Summary

Wyoming Statute § 35-1-403 and W.S. § 35-1-404(a)(v) direct the Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) State Registrar to install, maintain, and operate a system for all vital records and to submit to the Governor an annual report of its administration.

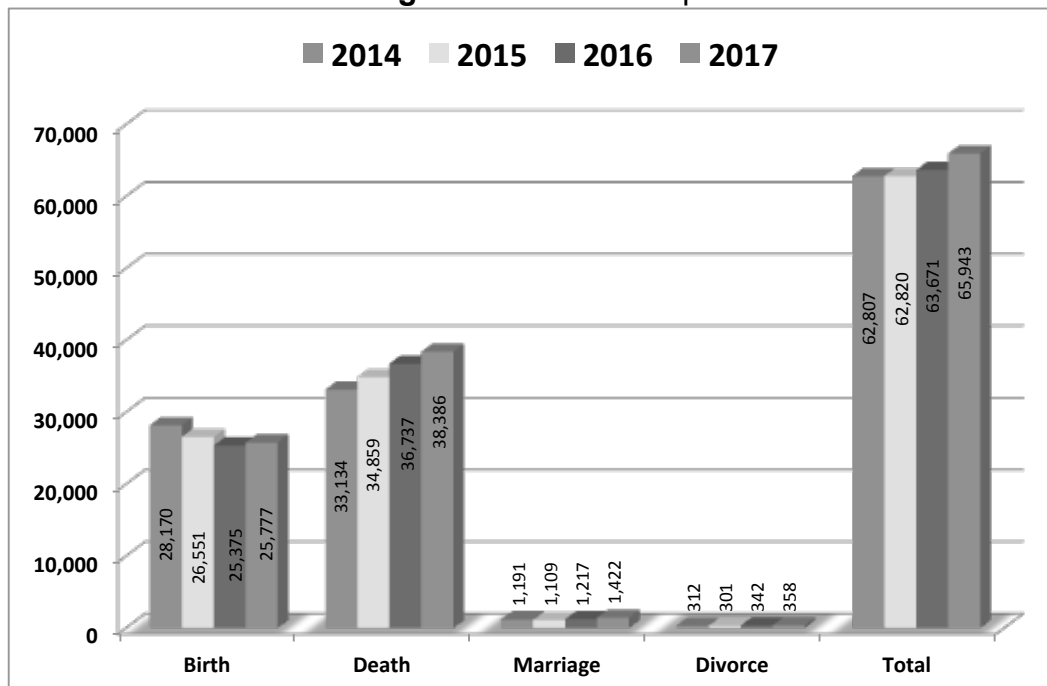
The Vital Statistics Services (VSS) program is administered with a combination of State General Fund, Federal and Other Appropriation dollars, and the program distributes funds back to the general fund through the sale of certified copies of vital events, enumeration at birth, fact of death and statistical data.

During calendar year 2017, Vital Statistics Services staff, which consists of 10 state employees, answered 45,628 requests for services/certificates, and issued over 65,943 certified copies of Wyoming vital records to residents and customers (see Figure 1 below).

These included:

- 25,777 Birth certificates;
- 38,386 Death certificates;
- 1,422 Marriage certificates; and,
- 358 Divorce certificates.

Figure 1: Certified Copies Issued



The mission of VSS is to install, maintain and operate a system of vital records. The office maintains over one million recorded events in a variety of media type and at four (4) geographically separate locations.

The vital records electronic registration system contains over one-half of Wyoming's vital records. The electronic application has over 1,705 users throughout Wyoming and adjoining states. Users consist of county clerks, for marriages; clerks of district court to complete divorce filings, court ordered changes, and adoptions; funeral homes, coroners and primary health care providers, to file and complete death certificates; and hospital health information managers, midwives, and physicians who file and certify births. The application requires around-the-clock access and reliability to ensure statutory filing requirements are met.

Vital Statistics Services continues to consolidate media into an electronic format, to provide a secure, accessible and long-term storage solution for vital records. The office expects to spend an estimated \$500,000 on this effort over the coming years. This undertaking will require changes to the vital records statutes, and associated rules and regulations used in the management, registration, access and digitization of the state's records. These changes will focus on developing low and/or no cost options for private companies to scan, index and share open vital records, and to scan and index closed records and developing a limited index for public use.

Section 2. Specific requirements of Statute

Wyoming Statute 35-1-404(a)(v) directs the State Registrar to submit an annual report to the Governor regarding the administration of the vital records system.

Section 3. Response to specific requirements of Statute

The records and data, which make up VSS, contribute to the state's ability to manage and identify health issues, track health status, and assess population trends. This task is demonstrated through the office's registration, statistics and data sharing capabilities.

The collection of vital event information (birth, death, marriage and divorce) is important for residents to prove identity, obtain a driver's license, gain employment, access survivor's benefits or attend educational institutions. Statistical data can also inform public policy and program planning. This data is intended to inform residents and leaders, and support state health programs at all levels in analysis and decision-making.

Birth and Death

Vital Statistics Services examines all residence births and deaths. This data also accounts for all resident births and deaths, which occur outside of Wyoming. This exchange of resident event data is transferred electronically through the State Territorial Exchange of Vital Events (STEVE), which is an application available to all states and territories. STEVE has an extended agreement for access and data sharing. This agreement allows each participant state to receive an electronic notification and file for resident out of state events; e.g., when a resident living in Wyoming is transferred from a Wyoming facility for medical treatment and passes away at an adjacent state facility, the death certificate, produced in that adjacent state, is sent to Wyoming through STEVE for statistical purposes. The STEVE application has an annual cost to subscribe

and its reporting function may be used by VSS for all current and future data sharing agreements, to include those statutory requirements with the Wyoming Secretary of State (Voter Registration), and those of other agencies; e.g., the Supreme Court (Jury Selection) and the Department of Transportation (Highway Fatalities).

The future of certifications and reports are nested in the agency's ability to quickly and accurately respond to vital record statistical and data requests. The Electronic Verification of Vital Events (EVVE) application provides outside sources an electronic verification that a vital event occurred within the state or territory of record. This system is currently being used for verification of birth for U.S. State Department passport applications and by other federal agencies for both births and deaths between Application Programming Interface (API) systems. This timely electronic notification has saved families' time while obtaining vital event information and has demonstrated the reduction of issues associated with program overpayment and refunds for federal agencies; such as, the Social Security Administration (SSA), Medicare, and Medicaid. For these electronic verifications, VSS receives payment for the service and these funds are distributed into a state trust account established to maintain Wyoming's VSS system of vital records.

Each of these systems; i.e., STEVE and EVVE, are operated using APIs, and within statutory disclosure laws and have streamlined data use agreements, providing better control of and access to vital records data, and how that data is stored.

Marriage and Divorce

Vital Statistics Services receives only marriage and divorce data for those events that occur inside Wyoming. Vital Statistics Services is charged to direct, supervise and control the activities of these officials related specifically to these events. Each event registration begins with the completion of a form, created by VSS, and filed with a county clerk for marriages or a clerk of district court for divorces and adoptions.

Vital Statistics Services is encouraged by the teamwork and partnership with each of these county officials and continues to partner with both groups on activities that streamline the application and registration process, and that reduce cost at the state and local level. During this reporting period, VSS and the state archives partnered with the county clerks to scan and attach marriage applications to the VSS system. This action enables the clerks to save a digital image of the event, instead of printing a physical document and then having that document scanned and transferred to microfilm. It is estimated this activity saves an average clerk approximately \$1,200.00 annually. This same activity is being implemented with the clerk of district court in an effort to reduce time on filing divorces and adoptions. Currently, five (5) clerks are filing adoptions on the VSS system electronically. This effort is reducing the need for copies, postage and physical space for document storage for both the county and state.

Vital Statistics Services partnered with the Wyoming Supreme Court to update Wyoming Statutes for petitions for adoption. This action clarified, "what" documents

were required to petition for adoption in Wyoming; i.e., highlighting the requirement for the VSS Report of Adoption as a base document for all adoption actions. This clarification brings together practice and procedure for the clerks and enables the VSS staff to better track pre and post adoption birth records.

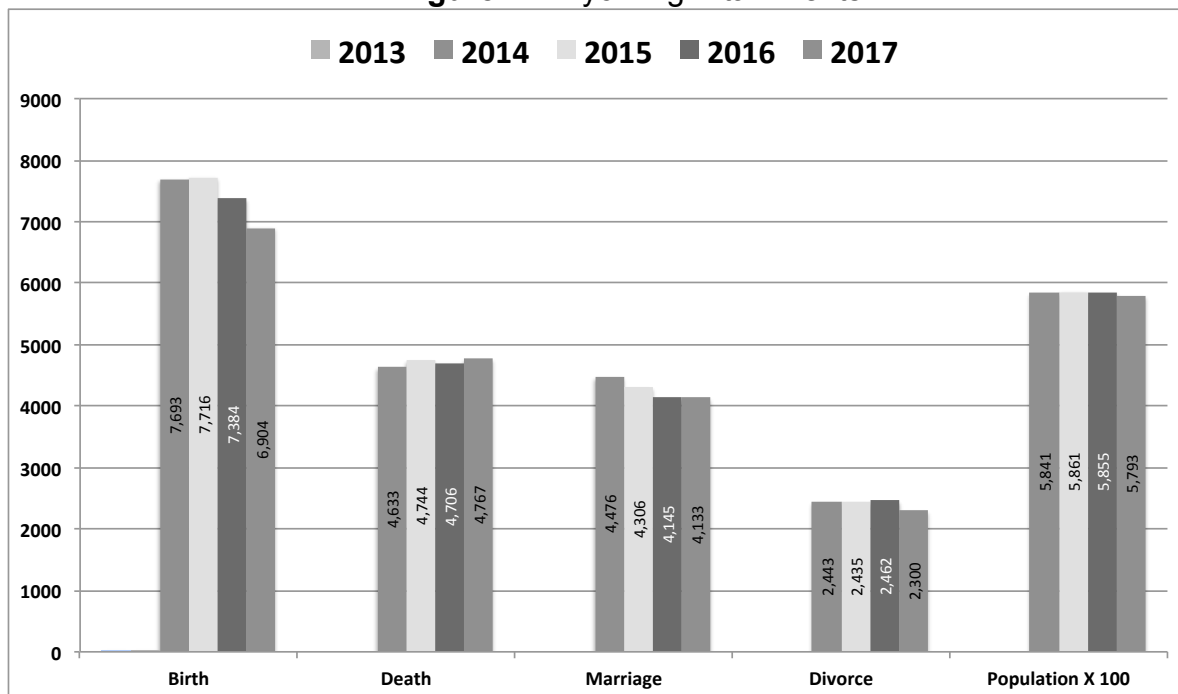
Registration Activities

Wyoming’s VSS registration section, consisting of three (3) full-time employees, continues to view and process all Wyoming vital record registrations.

Accurate and timely recordings are objectives for the registration unit. One employee handles Birth, Marriage and Divorce files and another focuses on Death registration. Birth and death registration has a statutory filing time of 10 and three (3) days respectively. Marriages and Divorce are statutory, but allow for collection, consolidation of a month’s files and then are advanced to the VSS office for review and recording. The state’s death totals continue to inch higher, as the resident population ages; marriage and divorce numbers remain stable, and birth numbers trend down.

Figure 2, below, illustrates the total number of vital events recorded for calendar years 2012 – 2017 with the state’s population x100.

Figure 2: Wyoming Vital Events

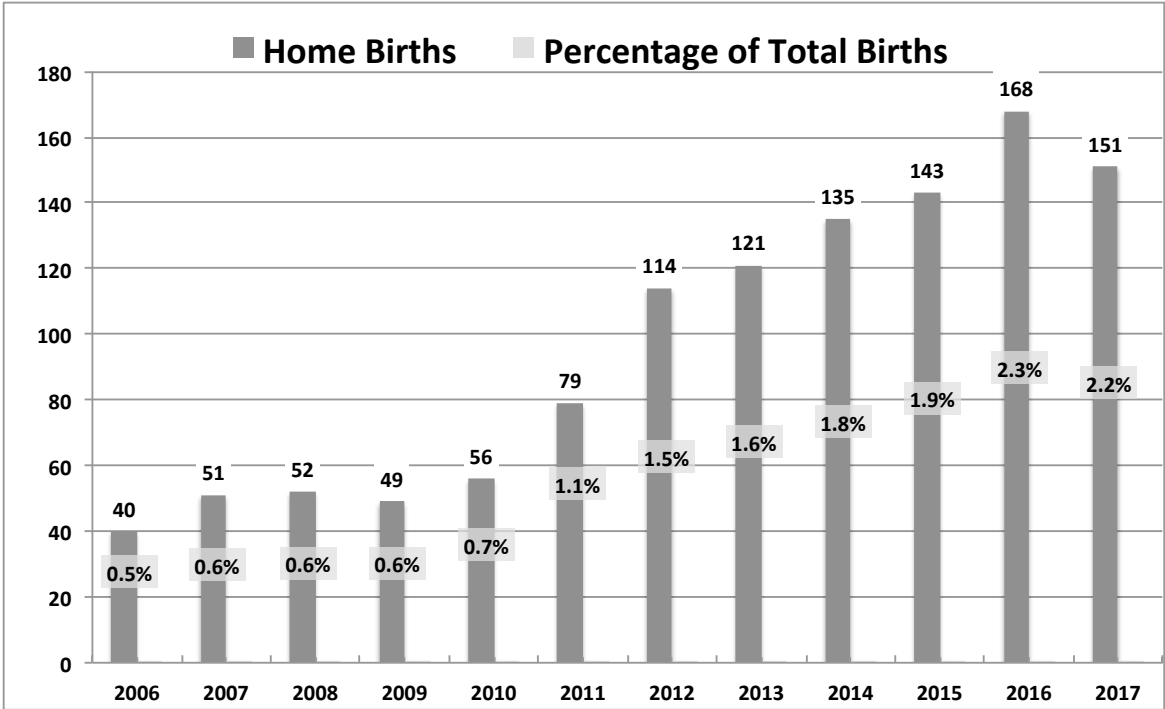


Resident Births

A total of 6,904 births were reported to Wyoming residents during the calendar year 2017. Of these births, 766 births occurred outside of the state for Wyoming residents, or 11.1% of the total births occurred outside Wyoming. This is the same percentage of out-of-state births as the previous year. Wyoming’s birth rate has remained at approximately 12 births per 1,000 residents, which is slightly above the national average.

During this reporting period, Wyoming experienced a settling of both resident, assisted home births and out of state births. State boarder counties have experienced the greatest increase in resident out of state births. Since the implementation of the Midwives Licensure Act in 2010, Wyoming has experienced an increase in assisted home births following the Act’s inception (See Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Assisted Home Births



Teenage Pregnancies

Wyoming continues to experience a downward trend in teenage pregnancies. The numbers have stabilized following a decrease over the last six (6), as demonstrated in Table 1, below. Although we are seeing a decrease in these numbers, Wyoming continues to experience a higher teen birth rate than the national average.

Table 1: Teenage Birth Rate

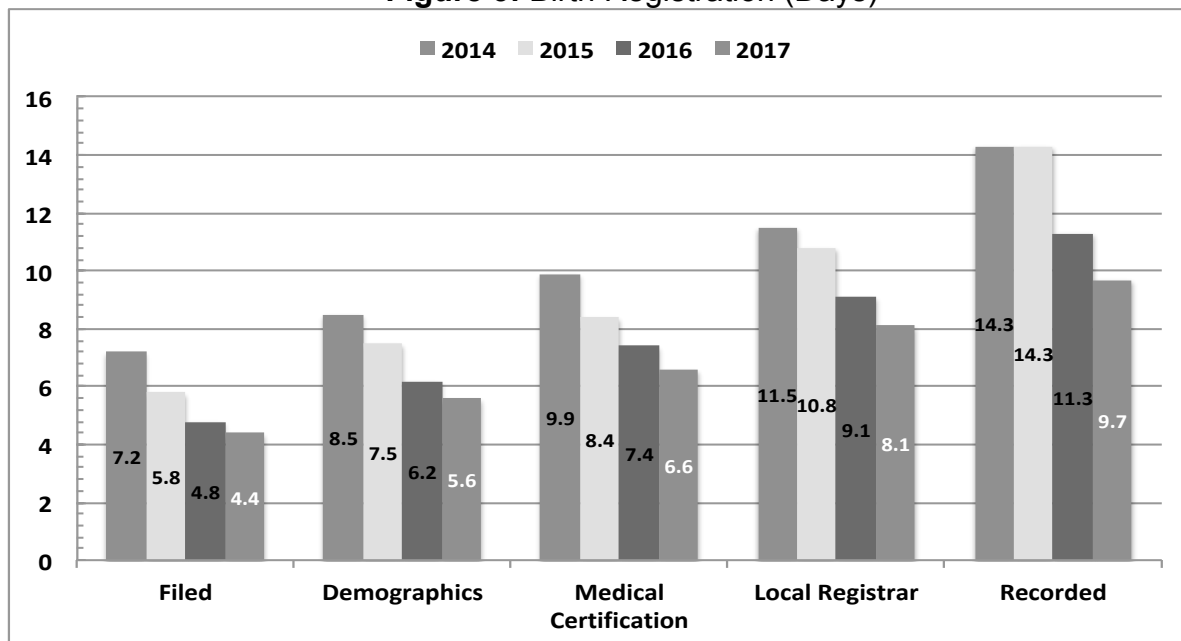
Year	Wyoming Rate Per 1,000	U.S. Rate Per 1,000
2012	34.6	29.4
2013	30.2	26.5
2014	30.6	24.2
2015	27.8	22.3
2016	26.2	20.3
2017	24.6	18.8

Birth Registration

In an effort to decrease the number of birth registration days and increase the number of referrals to the Wyoming Department of Health Vital Maternal and Child Health Unit and Public Health Nursing programs, the Vital Statistics Services enlisted the support of the local county Public Health Nurses to act as local registrars for birth registration.

This effort has improved both filing and recording times for birth registration and has contributed to an increase in both home visitations and distribution of public services information through the Healthy Baby Program Models; i.e., Best Beginnings and Nurse Family Partnership.

Figure 3: Birth Registration (Days)



By participating as a local registrar, local public health nurses are now able to screen all local births, and where birth mothers note their interest or desire for public health nurses to contact them regarding programs and services available in their communities, nearly 74% of the total referrals may be linked back to the mother's worksheet. This activity supports Wyoming Statute § 35-27-101 through W.S. § 35-27-104, Public Health Nurses Infant home Visitation Services.

The birth registration unit directed each birth facility to scan and attach copies of the original birth worksheets to the VSS system, in an effort to reduce the number of one-year corrections being made to birth certificates. Vital Statistics Services used the state's surplus system to obtain and distribute portable scanners to hospitals to scan each worksheet and attach the documents to the system electronically for administrative access and review. The result has been a reduced number of corrections and amendments to the records over the past year. By allowing the registration unit access to the original worksheets, the clerk is able to identify spelling and other errors, saving the facility time and saving the parents time and resources, where the clerk is able to correct the file prior to recording the event in VSS. The one-year correction rate has dropped from 64 corrections in 2016 to 34 in 2017. The state goal for recording all births is six (6) days. Currently, the 2017 average is 9.7 days with the initial filing at the facility taking an average of 4.4 days across the state (see figure 3 above).

Death Registration

A total of 4,706 Wyoming residents died during calendar year 2017 (See Figure 2 (p.6) above). Wyoming's death rate is below the national rate and has remained relatively stable over the last five (5) years, as shown in Table 3, below. Vital Statistics Services provides death data to both state and federal partners and is the lead provider for cause of death data in Wyoming. Specific death data may be found in the death appendices.

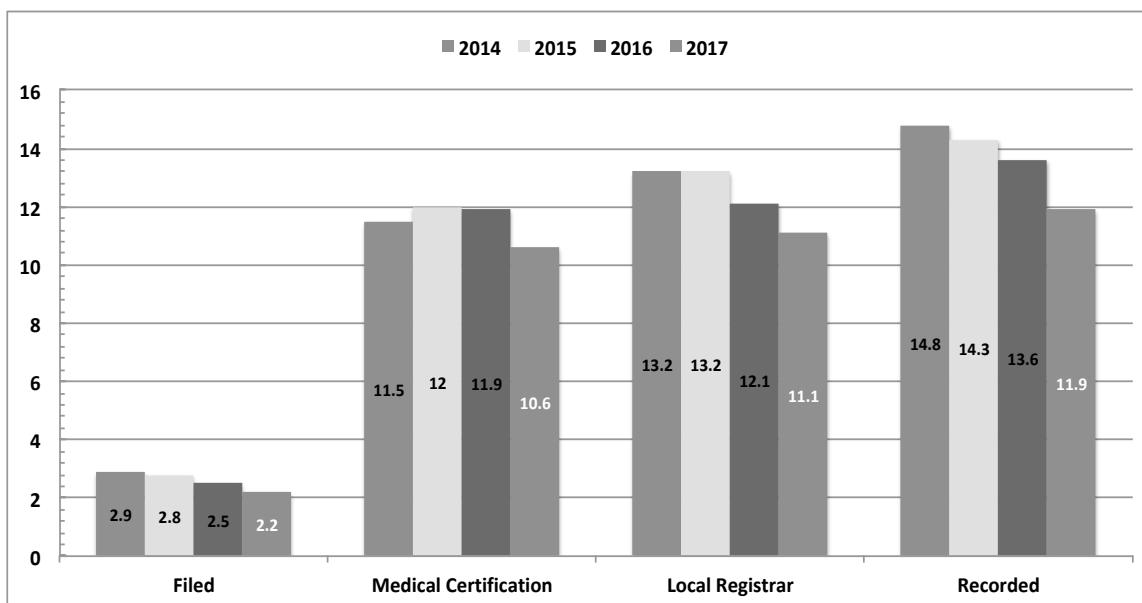
Table 3: Death Rate

Year	Wyoming Rate Per 100,000	U.S. Rate Per 100,000
2012	775	810.2
2013	767	821.5
2014	793	823.7
2015	809	828.0
2016	804	844.0
2017	823	Not available

Wyoming's average filing time in days for fact of death is less than two (2) days with the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS). This is within the statutory requirement of three (3) days for filing. Beginning in July of 2015, VSS required all deaths be filed through the EDRS, with the goal to reduce the amount of paper used in the process, decrease the time for filing, and eliminate errors in transcription and lost certificates. By removing these three (3) variables and requiring physicians along with local registrars to review and sign certificates online, the average recording for a fact of death was reduced from 14 to 13 days the first year. The unit's goal is to complete all certificates

within 10 days for deaths, where the manner of death is natural. To date, the number of days to file a death certificate stands at 11 days (See Figure 4 below).

Figure 4: Death Registration (Days)



Those events requiring additional reports or investigation, where the manner of death is other than natural, are targeted at 20 days, this period allows for pathology, and 30 days for an autopsy. The average number of days for recording deaths, where the manner of death is, other than natural, is 18 days. This filing period is down from 21 days the previous year. This current rate, as of the date for this report, is 14 days.

Medical Certification and Local Registration

Medical Certification continues to be an issue and the most time-consuming aspect of death registration. Though certification times have decreased, the average number of days from the time a death is filed to the primary health care provider certifying the file is eight (8) days. Allowing primary health care providers to sign; i.e., Physicians, Advance Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) and Physician Assistant's (PAs), has aided the death registration process and has provided relief in smaller communities where APRNs and PAs are the only providers available to local residents and often needed to sign death certificates.

Vital Statistics Services continues to research new and innovative ways to assist health care providers in their requirement to certify vital events. The office has been streamlining the notification process, and providing more timely feedback and follow-up notices to medical certifiers, and has focused on programs and programming tasks that automate the registration process, beginning with the decedent's electronic health record (EHR). The VSS staff has been involved in a pilot program using the EHR and the Wyoming Frontier Information Health Information Exchange (WYFI) as the "initiator" of the death file and the transport medium for death information, when a patient passes at a Wyoming facility. This pilot offers options for improved filing times and death data

quality because the information is extracted directly from the EHR and is certified by the primary health care provider at the source of the data. The objective is to reduce the number of times a certifier is required to touch or look at the decedent record and to initiate the death file with the state of Wyoming when the patient EHR has a discharge status for death. Vital Statistics Services estimates this filing method, once brought into practice, will reduce the over all filing and certification times from 10 days to around three (3) days.

Marriage

In 2017, there were 4,133 new marriages in Wyoming. This number has remained consistent over the last few years, although it is trending lower, as shown in Table 4, below.

Table 4: Marriages *

Year	Number
2014	4,476
2015	4,306
2016	4,145
2017	4,133

Thirteen counties use the State’s VSS system to record marriages. The remaining counties use a commercial, off-the-shelf system; e.g., Tylertech, which was developed, within the region for managing land deeds and title activities. Some of these counties are considering the VSS system for its lower cost and links to other vital records; e.g., divorces and other county marriages.

Divorce

There were 2,300 divorces in Wyoming in 2017. This number is stable, as shown in Table 5, below.

Table 5: Divorces *

Year	Number
2014	2,443
2015	2,434
2016	2,462
2017	2,300

* Note that marriages/divorces are administered, managed, and reported to the state by county officials. For more information on marriages and divorces, please see the detailed tables in the appendix.

Section 4. Appendices

In the attached appendix, please find the following information on the pages indicated:

- Historical Tables pp. 4-7
- Birth Tables pp. 8-27
- Death Tables pp. 28-41
- Marriage Tables pp. 42-43
- Divorce Tables pp. 44-45
- Definitions and Technical Calculations pp. 46-49