



Goal 1: Human and Family Development

Desired Community Condition: **Families are healthy and stable.**



Indicator: **Divorce Rates**

Progress Rating: **Local Trend:** **NEGATIVE** **National Comparison:** **WORSE**

Indicator Description

Divorce is defined as the legal termination or dissolution of a marriage. Data were not available at the City level, so data are presented for Bernalillo County. Bernalillo County divorce case statistics were obtained from the Second District of the New Mexico State Court and compared with divorce rate data from the U.S. Census.

Divorce has a direct impact on the stability of a family. If the divorcing couple does not have children, the impact is limited to the adults and surrounding family and is significantly less than if children are involved.

Why is this indicator important?

The largest impact of divorce is on the children of divorced parents. Paul Amato (1993) has suggested several major hypotheses regarding the causes of children’s difficulties: parental loss, economic loss, more life stress, poor parental adjustment, lack of parental competence, and exposure to interparental conflict. These children have more difficulty in school, more behavior problems, more negative self-concepts, more problems with peers, and more trouble getting along with their parents. These difficulties stay with them and may lead to reduced high school graduation rates, reduced incomes, and higher incarceration rates.

Data Sources

“The Effects of Divorce on Children,” Robert Hughes, Jr.; “Children’s adjustment to divorce: Theories, Hypotheses, and Empirical Support,” Amato, P.R. (1993); *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55, 23-38, U.S. Census Bureau

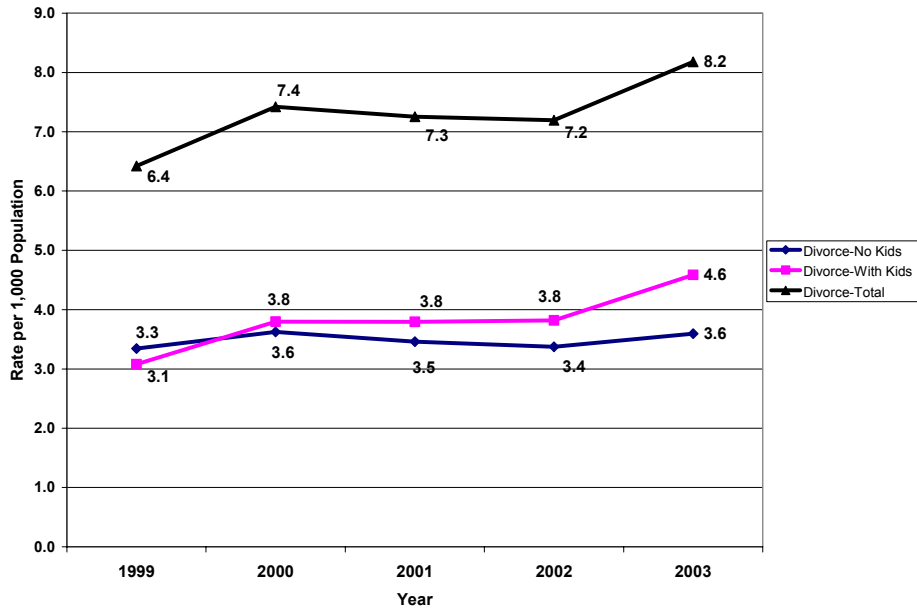
What can we tell from the data?

- Divorces are increasing in Bernalillo County, while the nationwide trend for divorces is decreasing.
- The 2001 divorce rate is higher for Bernalillo County than for the State of New Mexico and the State’s rate is higher than neighboring states and the United States. Colorado did not report in 2001.
- The divorce rate where there are children under age 18 is higher than the divorce rate where there are no children under 18 years of age.

Annual Divorce Rates per 1,000 Population for 2001

Jurisdiction	Rate per 1,000 Population
Arizona	4.2
New Mexico	5.1
Bernalillo County	7.3
Texas	4.1
United States	4.0

Number of Divorces per 1,000 Population in Bernalillo County



Number of Divorces for Married Couples per Number of Married Couples and the Number of Divorces for Married Couples with Children Under 18 per Number of Married Couples with Children Under 18

