

Divorce

Alberta GPI

Noteworthy:

- The divorce rate in Alberta increased by 357% between 1961 and 2003.
- The divorce rate (% of marriages ending in divorce) peaked in 1986 (at 51%), following amendments to the federal *Divorce Act*, and again in 1993 (at 48%).
- The estimated cost of family breakdown in Alberta increased by 610% from 1961 to 2003.
- The estimated cost of family breakdown amounted to almost \$21 million (1998\$) in 1961. By 2003, that figure had increased to almost \$149 million (1998\$).

The Cost of Family Breakdown: What is included?

- The cost of family breakdown includes costs to adults and children affected by divorce.
- The cost to adults is based on an estimate of the out-of-pocket expenses for legal fees, counseling, and establishing separate residences.
- The cost to children includes counseling, health costs, and the difficulties experienced at school, work, or in personal relationships.

Divorce in Alberta: How Much?

The gap between the number of marriages and the number of divorces in Alberta is substantially smaller today than it was in 1961. The divorce rate per 100,000 people increased substantially following Canada's introduction of the 1968 *Divorce Act*, and again with the amendments to that act in 1985. Rates rose sharply in 1986 with 9,556 divorces per 100,000 people in the province, as 51% of

marriages ended in divorce. This figure is in significant contrast to 1961, when just 10% of marriages ended in divorce. Marriage break-ups declined between 1993, when 48% of marriages ended in divorce, and 1997, when 42% of marriages ended in divorce. Since then, the divorce rate has been on the increase. In 2003, 45% of marriages ended in divorce, 357% more divorces than in 1961.

The increase in divorce rate experienced in Alberta between 1961 and 2003, means that more children are both experiencing their parents' separation and are growing up in single parent homes. Furthermore, Statistics Canada data shows that children are being affected by divorce at an increasingly younger age.

Rates of Marriage and Divorce in Alberta, 1961 to 2003

