Feitelson Law Firm Highlights Iowa Divorce Process and National Trends

September 15, 2026

WEST DES MOINES, IA - September 15, 2026 -
This report, distributed by Feitelson Law Firm, examines Iowa's divorce process alongside newly published national marriage and divorce data.

The National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University reported that the ratio of marriages to divorces nationwide reached 2.42 in 2024, based on U.S. Census Bureau data, the largest ratio recorded since the American Community Survey began tracking marriage and divorce experience in 2008. The center found 2,390,482 marriages and 986,810 divorces nationwide that year.

The national marriage-divorce ratio held relatively steady between 2015 and 2021, ranging from 2.10 to 2.16, before climbing in more recent years, according to the same research center. Researchers have also noted that the once widely repeated claim that half of all marriages end in divorce no longer reflects current data, with more recent estimates placing the first-marriage divorce rate closer to 11 to 13 divorces per 1,000 married adults annually.

Iowa is a no-fault divorce state, meaning a spouse does not need to prove wrongdoing to file. Under Iowa law, it is sufficient to state that the marriage is irretrievably broken, according to the Iowa Code governing dissolution of marriage. A divorce cannot be finalized until at least 90 days have passed from the date the other spouse is served with the petition, though exceptions can apply in cases involving domestic violence or other emergencies.

The Iowa divorce process generally begins with the filing of a petition for dissolution of marriage in district court, followed by service of the petition on the other spouse. Temporary orders addressing custody, support, or use of the family home may be entered while the case is pending. The parties then exchange financial information during discovery, and many cases are resolved through negotiation or mediation before reaching a final decree; if issues remain unresolved, the case proceeds to trial.

Iowa follows the principle of equitable distribution when dividing marital property, meaning courts divide assets and debts fairly rather than necessarily equally between spouses. Courts generally distinguish between marital property acquired during the marriage and separate property acquired beforehand or through inheritance, though how that distinction is applied can vary based on the circumstances of each case.

Iowa courts strongly encourage mediation in divorce cases, although it is not required in most circumstances. Cases involving contested custody, complex asset division, or business ownership often take longer to resolve than matters where both spouses reach agreement early in the process. Divorces involving significant retirement accounts, real estate holdings, or a privately owned business can also require additional appraisal or expert involvement before property can be divided, extending the timeline beyond the minimum 90-day waiting period.

Key issues resolved during an Iowa divorce typically include child custody and parenting time, child support calculated based on both parents' income, spousal support where applicable, and division of property and debts. Courts weigh each of these issues based on the specific circumstances presented, rather than applying a single fixed formula across all cases.

The information referenced in this release regarding national marriage and divorce trends was compiled by the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University, based on U.S. Census Bureau data. The information regarding Iowa divorce procedure reflects Iowa Code provisions governing dissolution of marriage. The figures and provisions described are presented for general public awareness and are not a substitute for individualized legal advice.

Feitelson Law Firm represents clients in divorce cases in Des Moines and throughout the surrounding communities, including West Des Moines, Waukee, Ankeny, and Ames.

###

For more information about Feitelson Law Firm, contact the company here:Feitelson Law FirmJeremy Feitelson+15152671265jeremy@feitelsonlaw.com1200 Valley West Drive, Suite 606, West Des Moines, IA 50266, US

Feitelson Law Firm

Feitelson Law Firm serves families in West Des Moines and Central Iowa with guidance on divorce, child custody, child support, adoption, prenuptial agreements, and mediation, backed by 20+ years of family law experience.

Website: https://feitelsonlaw.com/

Email: jeremy@feitelsonlaw.com

Phone: +15152671265

Feitelson Law Firm

Family Law