Introduction

About the Guide

This publication includes peer-reviewed scientific research, expert commentary and sound logical arguments regarding the societal benefits of marriage between one man and one woman. In preparation for this publication, United Families International (UFI) reviewed a vast number of social science studies, books and other sources on the topic of marriage. Watch for updates to this and other similar guides on topics impacting the family on UFI’s website: www.unitedfamilies.org

Position Statement

Marriage is crucial to society’s stability and its future. The weight of social science research indicates that marriage provides unique benefits for a man, woman and the children resulting from the marital union. Marriage assures that children have access to a mother and a father and the unique contributions that both provide to child development. The research is clear and profound: the fracturing of the natural family and the weakening of the institution of marriage come with a very severe cost to society. The breakdown of the traditional family handicaps future generations.

Revitalizing marriage should be a priority worldwide. Every nation stands to benefit from healthy marriages and healthy communities. Passing on to the next generation a happier, healthier and more successful marriage culture carries with it clear and succinct benefits.

United Families International respects the rights of individuals to freely associate. We respect the noble efforts of single parents who strive to raise their children in less than ideal circumstances. While the research cited in this publication points to the overall advantages experienced by married biological parents, we acknowledge that a broad continuum of outcomes exists among all categories of parents. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon public policy makers to recognize the significant value added to communities by the marriage advantage. Cost-benefit analyses and all things considered, marriage between a man and a woman is an essential asset that assures a productive and stable community.

About United Families International

United Families International is a 501(c)(3) public charity devoted to strengthening the traditional family as the fundamental unit of society at the local, national and international levels. UFI is a worldwide organization, accredited with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. UFI seeks (1) to educate government, community and religious leaders and citizens at the grass roots level on issues affecting the family and (2) to promote public policies and programs that preserve the traditional family.
Acknowledgements

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*Courtesy of The Howard Center for Family, Religion & Society  
**Courtesy of The Heritage Foundation
Executive Summary

Marriage is a unique, opposite-sex union with legal, social, economic and spiritual dimensions. It is a fundamental and universal social institution and the mechanism by which every known society seeks to obtain for each child the love, attention and resources of a mother and a father. The happiness, development and productivity of a new generation are bound to the marriage and the family unit. The successful development of children is critical to the success and preservation of nations. Because of marriage’s essential role, states and nations have chosen to provide unique benefits and incentives to those who choose to be married.

There is now broad bipartisan recognition that healthy marriage affords substantial benefits for adults and their children. Stable marriage has a positive effect on the economic, emotional and psychological well-being of men and women and dramatically benefits the well-being of children. A wealth of social science research attests to this conclusion. Efforts to uphold marriage between one man and one woman as the foundation for the family – the fundamental unit of society – should be supported and strengthened. Families, communities and responsible governments should use all prudent means to encourage healthy, lawful marriage and to discourage pre-marital sex, out-of-wedlock childbearing, adultery, divorce and alternative family forms.

Marriage Leads to:

• Better health and greater longevity
• Less crime, less violence
• Safer homes
• Safer communities
• Less poverty, more wealth
• Healthier society
• Better intimate relations
• Less substance abuse and addiction
• Less hardship and better outcomes for children
• Less government, lower taxes
• More happiness
This publication provides factual support, motivation and encouragement to responsible citizens and policy makers in the continuing effort to preserve and protect the traditional family as the fundamental unit of society.

This guide strives to serve the following purposes:

**To educate** the public, government agencies, news media, non-governmental organizations, religious organizations, families and individuals on facts about marriage and the consequences of marriage to individuals and society;

**To arm** citizens with factual information enabling them to make informed decisions regarding relationships and family;

**To equip** policy makers with research, facts and logical arguments in favor of marriage; and

**To provide** a reference source to citizens for use in articulating the benefits of marriage.

The guide was also created to assist in advancing the debate in the following scenarios:

- legislative debates
- school board meetings
- city council meetings
- preparing letters to the editor
- classroom debates
- educational term papers
- community involvement
- discussions with friends, family and neighbors

The section on **Questions & Answers about Marriage** provides insights into the arguments frequently raised in discussions and publicity about marriage.

The section on **Fast Facts & Commentary** supports the Questions & Answers section by providing peer-reviewed research, expert analysis and social science data regarding the myths and misrepresentations surrounding marriage.

“The future belongs to those people and cultures that deeply commit to ideas grounded in human nature: Men and women are not interchangeable units; sex has a meaning beyond immediate pleasure, society needs babies; children need mothers and fathers; marriage is a word for the way we join men and women to make the future happen.”

Maggie Gallagher,
President of the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy, syndicated columnist and the author of three books on marriage
Questions & Answers about Marriage

Supporting documentation and commentary can be found in the Fast Facts & Commentary section
Question 1
Are people still interested in getting married?

Answer

Ninety-eight percent of never-married survey respondents said they wanted to marry, and 88 percent said that marriage should be a lifelong commitment.*

Asked to select their top two goals, a majority of Americans included a happy marriage as a foremost goal. The number one aspiration of high school seniors was “having a good marriage and family life.”*** The proportion of high school seniors calling marriage and family “extremely important” has risen over the last two decades. Even cohabiting couples cast an eye toward marriage, as they mistakenly view their domestic relationships as a precursor to a successful marriage. Numerous surveys show that most young people continue to aspire to life-long marriage and not to the disposable marriages too often modeled by those in the media spotlight.

In an international survey, only 10 percent of Americans agreed that “marriage is an out-dated institution,” compared to 26 percent in the United Kingdom and 36 percent in France. A majority of American high school seniors want to get married -- 82 percent of girls and 70 percent of boys agree that “having a good marriage and family life” is “extremely important” to them.***

* National telephone survey of 1,503 Americans age 18 and older, (2004)

See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 1-16, 156-160
**Question 2**

To be happy, shouldn’t you just stay single?

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**Answer**

When it comes to happiness, married people have a decided advantage. A survey of 14,000 adults over a 10-year period found that marital status was one of the most important predictors of happiness. According to the latest data, 40 percent of married individuals said they were very happy with their life in general, compared with just less than 25 percent of those who were single or cohabiting. The separated and divorced were the least happy group.*

Married people reported the highest levels of well-being, regardless of whether they were happily married or not. Even when controlling for relationship happiness, being married is associated with higher self-esteem, greater life satisfaction, greater happiness and less distress.**

Married people are not only happier, they have better health and financial resources as well. In looking at indicators of well-being, the data gives little support to the myth that single adults lead better, happier lives.

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See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 6, 17-19, 21-23, 26-32, 41-45, 90-129
Question 3
Can business management afford to ignore the state of marriage among employees, or are healthy marriages beneficial to profit-driven organizations?

Answer
At first glance, it would appear that marriage and the business world are distinctly unrelated. However, research over recent decades reveals a different perspective. Building marriages and strong families is not only good for individuals and communities, but it is good for a company’s bottom line. Successfully married individuals with stable family relationships contribute to increased profits in the workplace. Unhappy marriages and divorce among employees often decrease profitability.

Employees in failing relationships can cost employers money. There are substantial productivity declines for workers in failing relationships. These workers often have health concerns: increased stress and anxiety, increased rates of depression and increased rates of substance abuse. These workers directly cost companies in higher healthcare expenditures and absentee rates and indirectly through the societal effects of broken families.

Conversely, employees in successful relationships are more likely to increase profits for their employers. These workers are more stable, more committed to their employer and are often considered more dependable and motivated. Employees in healthy relationships are also physically healthier, experiencing fewer chronic health problems like stress, anxiety and depression, saving employers money in overall health care expenditures.

In the interests of increasing profitability, employers will do well to realize that business takes place in the boardroom and the family room.* In short, happily-married employees are good for business.

See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 15-23, 38-45, 90-129
Question 4
Since traditional marriage in the U.S. has been declining for a few decades, isn’t the logical course to follow the Scandinavian model in which the government steps in to assist families by meeting the needs of both parents and children while promoting alternate family forms?

Answer
If countries choose to follow the Scandinavian model by promoting and rewarding alternate family forms (single parenting, cohabitation, same-sex unions) that break down traditional marriage, their governments must also be prepared for the inevitable rise in welfare costs.

Government can never create enough social programs to compensate for problems driven by premarital sex, out-of-wedlock childbearing and failed marriages.

The shoring up of traditional marriage is essential. Of the $150 billion a year spent on various means-tested welfare programs in the United States, 75 percent of that money goes to single parents and individuals in non-traditional relationships. The increasing frequency of alternative family forms does not justify government endorsement. The United States does not have a “welfare problem” so much as it has a problem related to the decline of marriage.

Marriage researcher David Popenoe said that the United States is moving in the direction of the weaker family structures of Europe while lacking many of the welfare “safety-nets” found there, and that the negative effects of marital decline on children will likely be heightened in America.

See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 6, 26-129, 140-155

“When men and women fail to form stable marriages, the first result is a vast expansion of government attempts to cope with the high cost in social needs that result. There is scarcely a dollar that state and federal government spend on social programs that is not driven in large part by family fragmentation: crime, poverty, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, school failure, mental and physical health problems.”

Question 5
Is it true that the majority of women in the United States today are living without a husband?

Answer

According to 2005 figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, a clear majority (56 percent) of all women over the age of 20 were married. Moreover, nearly all women in the U.S. will get married at one time or another. Two-thirds of the women in the 34-39 and 40-44 age groups were married. Among women 50 and over, 94 percent had been married at one time or another and some 79 percent were either currently married or widowed.

A 2007 media headline stated “Fifty-One Percent of All Women Are Now Living without a Spouse.” This deceptive use of U.S. census data included girls between the ages of 15 and 19, and women whose husbands were working out of town, in the military or who were institutionalized. The misleading “51 percent” figure also included nine million elderly widowed women.

The Census Bureau numbers clearly show that marriage is far from dead. Marriage is less common than it used to be, but the number of people who want to be married and those succeeding in marriage are still extraordinarily high. Nevertheless, the media portrays marriage as a collapsing, outmoded, dysfunctional institution – despite its longevity and resilience.

See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 1-11
**Question 6**

Would it be better if the government got completely out of marriage? Why not leave the defining and support of marriage to individuals and churches?

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**Answer**

For centuries, civil law around the world supported marriage as a necessary and fundamental social good. Marriage and family are the structural underpinning of all successful societies. Marriage is the legal framework that ties men and women to the children their union creates; it is the logical and ideal setting for nurturing and developing the next generation. Societies cannot assume that such a vital, life-sustaining entity as marriage can be maintained without the support of government and the community, particularly in secularized society. Government does not depend upon churches and faith communities to assure the education of children or the maintenance of private property because it is understood that the proper function of government is to produce educated citizens and to facilitate prosperous economies. Is marriage beneficial enough to society that governmental, community and religious institutions should all support it? Clearly, that is why for centuries they have done so.

Government involvement in marriage would not simply end with the cessation of issuing marriage licenses. Government would continue to be heavily involved as taxpayer-funded public agencies pick up the pieces and engage in damage control when marriage either does not occur or when marriage fails. Each year, the government spends between $150 and $200 billion in subsidies to single parents. Much of this expense could be avoided if the mothers were married to the fathers of their children. Responsible individuals of all political persuasions acknowledge the importance of marriage to the well-being of children, adults and society as a whole. They recognize that government has a long-established and legitimate role in maintaining and supporting marriage.

**See:** Fast Facts and Commentary # 15, 16, 26-112, 165-173
**Question 7**

*Since marriage is about loving, committed relationships, should same-sex couples be allowed to enjoy all of the benefits afforded by marriage?*

**Answer**

*M*arriage does not exist so that government can sanction and validate romantic relationships; civil marriage exists because society needs children and it needs them raised in the most optimal environment possible. Tax breaks, subsidies and other benefits are conferred because society receives something in return. A stable marriage between a man and a woman is the only relationship that has the biological potential to produce children and then provide the optimal environment in which to rear the next generation. This is a societal and governmental imperative.

Marriage is not an issue of love, rights or sexual preference. All loving relationships are not equal, nor have they ever been so. United Families International respects the rights of people to freely associate as they wish, while also recognizing that marriage is not about adult rights and adult benefits. Marriage is principally about the bearing, nurturing and development of children. There is no mandate to ratify a “right” for some individuals that stands in direct conflict with the equal right of children to have both a mother and a father.

The same arguments that require legal recognition of same-sex “marriage” also require legal acknowledgement and protection for any consensual sexual practice or form of marriage. Once the significance of a union between one man and one woman is abandoned, there will be little -- if any -- principled ground upon which to deny marital status to group marriage, incestuous coupling or any type of loving relationship. Same-sex unions are not a minor change to marriage, but represent a radical redefinition of the one institution we know to be best for children.

*See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 14-16, 48, 57-89, 156-160, 165-173*
Question 8
Is individual happiness the most important goal in life for adults? Do marriage and family hinder autonomy, individuality and the pursuit of happiness?

Answer

The self-fulfillment sentiment is articulated by the following statements:

“As the economic necessity of it has become less pressing, people have discovered that they no longer need marriage. It restricts our choices and is too confining, which is why fewer people are marrying.” -- Laura Kipnis, professor of media studies at Northwestern University

“We no longer need a spouse for economic security or to [financially] take care of us when we get old. We can do these things for ourselves now.” -- Stephanie Coontz, professor of history at The Evergreen State College

Emotional fulfillment and individual happiness are important and worthy goals, but they are not the only worthwhile goals. The quest for greater happiness and individual choice often clashes directly with the obligations and social norms that hold families together and enable communities to prosper. Children greatly benefit from healthy, intact marriages. Adult happiness and well-being cannot trump the best interests of children without consequences.

On measures of happiness and health, married people fared better than non-married persons. Many married persons find great pleasure and fulfillment in raising children and sharing in their joys and successes. This family life often leads to further joys with the presence of grandchildren. When individuals make sacrifices for the benefit of their family, they report greater long-term happiness and self-fulfillment.

See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 17-23, 38-54

“Marriage itself, detached from any objective foundation, is seen by many as possessing little or no intrinsic worth but as being a means to an end: the end, that is, of ‘personal happiness’ or ‘fulfillment.’ In the quest for fulfillment, spouses and children are often looked upon not as persons to be loved and valued for their own sake but as objects to be acquired, enjoyed, and discarded.”

**THE KEY TO HAPPY MARRIAGE**

**Question 9**

Ninety-four percent of never-married singles agreed that “when you marry you want your spouse to be your soul mate, first and foremost.”* Is finding the right person – one’s soul mate -- to love and marry the key to a happy marriage?

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**Answer**

Searching for the “right person” facilitates the acceptability of disposable marriages and a perpetual search for that one, unique person. Rather than searching for one’s “soul mate,” the focus should be on developing character traits to be the “right person.”

While love is an important component of a successful marriage, love alone is not enough. Marriage requires commitment, faithfulness, work and sacrifice. A couple can be successful in marriage when each member:

- has done a reasonable job of selecting a like-minded mate;
- is committed to marriage in spite of the inevitable challenges;
- has developed effective communication and problem-solving skills;
- is more concerned about their spouse than themselves and has developed preservation and enhancement of love skills; and
- recognizes a commitment to past and future generations.

Sexual attraction, while certainly important to marriage, is only one of many components that go into successful partner selection. Ideally, one is marrying not only a sexual partner, but also a best friend. The evidence of long-term marital success suggests that partners should be selected mainly on the grounds of mutual compatibility and shared attitudes, values and beliefs. These are grounds that extend beyond physical attraction, which declines with aging and familiarity.


**See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 25, 140-155**
Question 10
Are radical feminists correct in asserting that marriage was instituted for the benefit of men, and that it is oppressive to women physically, emotionally and economically?

Answer
This perspective does not hold up under scrutiny. Marriage, as an institution, has enormous economic benefits for women and children. Stable marriage has substantial positive, emotional and psychological benefits for women, and it dramatically improves the well-being of children. Not surprisingly, the harsh anti-marriage views of radical feminists have failed to gain broad public acceptance, and the overwhelming majority of Americans continue to view marriage in a positive light. In all socioeconomic classes, most men and women wish to marry, and they entertain hope for happiness and stability within marriage.

Married women experience lower levels of violence, poverty, depression and emotional problems, enjoy better sex lives and live longer than single women. While marriage enhances well-being for both genders, married women scored higher than married men on measures of perception of well-being.*

Wives typically gain greater financial advantages from marriage. Family life -- marriage and childbearing -- has an extremely important civilizing influence on men. Marriage socializes men by focusing and regulating their sexual energy, provides the greatest likelihood of safety for women, provides children with a mother and a father and provides greater stability.


**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**Question 11**

Is domestic violence inherent in marriage?

**Answer**

Domestic violence is most common in the transitory, free-form, cohabitating relationships that are surging in numbers. The claim that married women are subject to greater risk of violence collapses under the weight of research. While there are serious and lamentable exceptions that must be addressed, the research is unequivocal: overall, marriage is the safest place for women and children.

In a study by the United States Department of Justice, the National Crime Victimization Survey data suggested that mothers with children who had married (including those who were currently married as well as those who were divorced and separated) were half as likely to experience domestic violence by an intimate as were mothers with children who have never been married.

Unmarried cohabitants reported nearly four times more serious physical injuries as compared to married couples.* U.S. and Canadian women in cohabiting relationships were nine times more likely to be killed by their partner than women in marital relationships.**


See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 46-49, 53
**Question 12**

Is sex outside of marriage better than married sex?

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**Answer**

Surveys show that husbands and wives are more satisfied with sex than sexually active singles. Forty-eight percent of husbands labeled sex with their partner “extremely satisfying emotionally,” compared to just 37 percent of cohabiting men; 50 percent of married men found sex physically satisfying compared to 39 percent of cohabiting men. For women, 42 percent of married women and 39 percent of cohabiting women said they were “extremely satisfied emotionally” by sex with their partner. After controlling for age and other differences, married men and married women were substantially more satisfied with sex than cohabiting or single men and women.

In addition, research suggests that there are strong reasons for believing marriage improves sex in a variety of ways. Marriage provides:

- **Proximity**—Sex is easier for married people because it is more comfortably fitted into their daily lives.
- **A long-term contract**—Married people have more incentive to invest time and energy into pleasing their partners. They have more time in which to learn how to please them and are more confident that the gifts they give to their partners will be reciprocated.
- **Exclusivity**—Without other sexual outlets, married people put more effort into working out a mutually agreeable sex life than the less committed do.
- **Emotional bonding**—In marriage, sex becomes a symbol of the union of the partners, of their commitment to care for each other both in and out of the bedroom. By giving sex this added meaning, marriage increases the satisfaction men and women draw from sexual activity, both their own and their partner’s.**

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“Of all sexually active people, married couples who are sexually faithful to one another experience the most physical pleasure and emotional satisfaction with their sex lives.”


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See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 130-132, 134-139
COHABITATION

Question 13
Are couples that cohabit (live together) similar in all respects to married couples?

Answer

Cohabiting couples do not experience many of the well-documented benefits of traditional marriage. Living together before marriage may seem like a harmless or progressive family trend until one takes a careful look at evidence to the contrary. Cohabiting couples are more closely aligned statistically -- in areas of health (physical and emotional), economics and well-being of children -- with single people and single parents. The empirical data paints an overwhelmingly negative picture of the outcomes for both children and adults living in cohabiting households.

Cohabitating relationships are often viewed differently by each gender. Women tend to see a cohabitating relationship as a step in the dating relationship that is moving the couple toward marriage. Although men view cohabitation as an opportunity to test compatibility, they place great value on cohabitation as a sexual opportunity without the ties of long-term commitment and are more concerned about the relationship curtailing their freedom. Statistically, cohabiting individuals do not make the same commitment to their partner that marriage partners make.*

A marriage license is more than just a commitment to a spouse. It is also evidence of a commitment to the care and upbringing of children.


See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 6, 8, 9, 11, 25-43, 46-47, 49, 78, 82, 90, 94-96, 124, 131, 135, 138

See UFI's "Guide to Family Issues: Cohabitation vs. Marriage"
**Question 14**

Is there a difference in the role that a man or a woman fills in a family or in a marriage? Are traditional male/female roles nothing more than a social construct?

**Answer**

Alternative forms of marriage and families do not achieve the same positive results for individuals and society that marriage between a man and woman provides. Men and women are distinctly different; they are not interchangeable units.

A father can never adequately fulfill the role of a mother and a mother can never adequately fulfill the role of a father. Each gender brings vitally important and unique elements to a child’s development. When it comes to parenting, common sense says that single parents and same-sex couples cannot bring this essential gender mix to bear on their children. At its best, parenting is a cooperative activity, a true partnership between husband and wife. Fathers should have an equivalent parenting role with mothers. However, this does not mean that fathers and mothers can play the role of the opposite gender.

Family organization is necessarily based to some extent on incontestable biological differences between the sexes. From a social science research standpoint, it is clear that men and women bring different, but complementary, skills and talents to the task of parenting. The combined roles become greater than the sum of separate parts. Remove one gender from the equation and any of numerous difficulties may potentially ensue -- as many single parents will readily testify. Boys and girls need the loving daily influence of both male and female parents to reach their full developmental potential.

“Studies suggest that men and women bring different strengths to the parenting enterprise, and that the biological relatedness of parents to their children has important consequences for the young, especially girls.”

The Witherspoon Institute, “Marriage and the Public Good: Ten Principles”

See: Fast Facts and Commentary #14, 56-75, 79-80, 84
**Question 15**

Are single parents as capable as married biological or adoptive parents of raising healthy, happy children? As the saying goes: all children need is love.

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**Answer**

The traditional family structure of a married man and woman has a greater capacity to generate the time, money, supervision and emotional capital required for raising children in an increasingly complex and demanding economy and society. Healthy traditional families can focus their resources and attention on children without having their attention diverted towards fragmented relationships. In many single-parent homes, the lack of adequate economic resources and the time constraints of single parents place children at a disadvantage. “All children need is love” is a nice sentiment, but this is far from reality. **Two parents united in a healthy marriage represent the best environment for rearing children.**

Evidence suggests that a family built around a married man and woman and their biological or adopted children is better at building high levels of child nurturing. The traditional family produces strong parent-child bonds which in turn will contribute to the success of the next generation. In spite of the valiant efforts of many single parents, children are more likely to suffer when they are denied the nurturing influence of their mother and father in a stable marriage. In singlemother homes, the hope that other men (uncles, brothers, boyfriends) will be able to substitute for absent biological fathers receives little to no support in the empirical data.

Although there are exceptions, the outcomes associated with single parenting are often negative. Children living with their married parents are more likely to have better health, fewer behavioral and emotional problems, better cognitive and verbal development and greater educational and job attainment. These children also experience lower dependency on welfare and better financial well-being, less exposure to crime, a lower risk of being sexually abused and less marital problems of their own.

**See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 14, 26-42, 46-88, 104, 112-128**
Question 16
Since people live much longer today, can we reasonably expect people to stay in a marriage for a lifetime?

Answer

Extended longevity in life can account for only a tiny fraction of the increase in divorce from 1965 to 1980 and very little of the increase before then. Only a decline in age-specific death rates among young adults could have much actual effect on divorce, because a large majority of divorces occur among young adults. Those death rates have changed very little since the middle of the 20th century.

The increase in life expectancy due to a decline in age-specific death rates among older adults has been accompanied by an increase in the typical age at marriage, leaving the natural life span of marriage (excluding divorce) only moderately longer than it was earlier in the last century.

With determination, commitment, honesty, faithfulness and good communication and problem-solving skills, men and women can indeed have a marriage that lasts a lifetime.

See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 1-5, 10, 140-155

“To dare to pledge our whole selves to a single love is the most remarkable thing most of us will ever do.”

Question 17
Are attempts to shore up marriage through education programs effective or a waste of taxpayer dollars?

Answer
Marriage education programs represent a wise investment of public resources. Public programs in support of marriage and the behaviors that give children the best chance to be born into and reared in an optimal environment are beneficial to society.

In 1996, the U.S. Congress made the following statement: marriage is the foundation of a successful society and is an essential institution of a successful society which promotes the interests of children.*

Opponents of marriage education have suggested that there is no evidence that the programs are successful, but at least 29 journal articles covering more than 100 separate evaluations show that marriage-strengthening programs are effective in reducing strife, improving communication, increasing parenting skills, enhancing marital happiness and reducing divorce and separation. A major study by the Institute for Research and Evaluation reported that “Community Marriage Policies” in 114 cities yielded a net decline in the divorce rate of 17.5 percent over seven years.**

Marriage education programs provide couples with the tools needed to build healthy, stable marriages, thereby reducing rates of welfare dependence, child poverty, domestic violence and other social ills that impede the healthy development of children, families and nations.


See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 15, 16, 140-155
Question 18
The institution of marriage is so fractured and problematic. Can it even be saved?

Answer

The decline of marriage is not inevitable. Between 1997 and 2002, the proportion of children under six living in intact married families actually increased.*

The history of social progress is one of confronting and overcoming seemingly well-entrenched problems: slavery, racism, drunk driving, domestic violence, sexism and others. In each case, people have proven that when a social practice is wrong or destructive, the correct response is perseverance in bringing about positive change.

Few social problems are ever perfectly resolved. Certainly, there will always be children born without committed fathers and there will always be abusive marriages that should not continue. But social recovery is possible, as evidenced by the turnaround in recent years of the divorce rate. The goal is not perfection, but progress; not to eliminate divorce, but to reduce it further; not to make every marriage last, but to help more marriages succeed.**

What happens to marriage -- whether it fails or thrives -- depends on what we do today. Accepting the decline of marriage as inevitable means giving up on far too many of our children. They deserve better than that.


See: Fast Facts and Commentary # 2, 3, 5, 10, 15, 16, 139-163
FAST FACTS & COMMENTARY

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The Fundamental Nature of Marriage

CHART 1

America’s Mid-Century “Culture of Marriage”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Marriage Rate*</th>
<th>% Above Base Year (1932)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>+32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>+48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>+37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>+76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>+49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>+47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>+31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>+33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>+41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>+37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>+16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>+10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>+ 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>- 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>- 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>- 11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Marriages per 1,000 Unmarried Women, 15 years & older)

“There are few things I know for certain, but here is one: all societies need a critical mass of healthy marriages in order to function well, and when societies lose that critical mass, they will forever be seeking new programs and services to cope with the ever increasing social problems that result from its absence.”


The revolution in marriage law, launched by Supreme Court cases Griswold (1965) Loving (1967) and climaxing in Eisenstadt (1972), directly coincides with the collapse of America’s 20th-century culture of marriage.

Evidence suggests that the link between individual benefits and marriage is not primarily due to particularly competent and healthy persons being more likely to marry and stay married but instead is primarily due to the effect of the marital relationship on individuals.


1. In the early years of the new century, there were approximately 6,400 marriages per day in the United States. For men, the median age at first marriage in 2003 was 27.1, compared to 23.2 in 1970. For women, it was 25.3 in 2003 versus 20.8 in 1970.


CHART 2

The Retreat from Marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status - Female (Percent Married)</th>
<th>Ages 20-24</th>
<th>Ages 25-29</th>
<th>Ages 30-34</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>72.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>69.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>68.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change, 1984 to 2003</td>
<td>-41.7%</td>
<td>-17.8%</td>
<td>-8.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status - Male (Percent Married)</th>
<th>Ages 20-24</th>
<th>Ages 25-29</th>
<th>Ages 30-34</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>59.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change, 1984 to 2003</td>
<td>-44.7%</td>
<td>-16.4%</td>
<td>-14.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2. Although they marry at a later age, the vast majority of Americans -- 91 percent of women and 89 percent of men -- eventually marry. This number has declined since the late 1960s when 97 percent of men and 97 percent of women married.


3. Ninety-one percent of women born at the turn of the 20th century ever married. Of the women coming of age during the economic boom after World War II, 97 percent eventually married, a historic peak. At the turn of the 21st century, marriage rates were much the same...
as they were 100 years earlier. Women born between 1961 and 1965 had an 89-percent chance of marrying at least once. Among first marriages, wives were on average only 2.1 years younger than their husbands; among second marriages, 3.4 years.

4. In 1960, the proportion of an American’s life spent living with a spouse and children was 62 percent, the highest in history. By 1980, this proportion had dropped to 43 percent, the lowest in history. U.S. Census Bureau projections suggested that by 2010 married couples with children will account for only 20 percent of total households and families with children will account for little more than one-quarter of all households, the lowest figure in recorded U.S. history. By contrast, the percentage of one-person households was projected to approach 27 percent of total American households by 2010.

5. The overall divorce rate peaked around 1980 and appears to have declined modestly since then. Divorce rates per 1,000 marriages were 22.6 in 1980 and 17.7 in 2004.

6. Marriage provides: (1) social support that improves physical health and survival. As a marriage improves over time, so does the reported health of the husband and wife. Spouses encourage healthy behavior that in turn affects emotional and physical well-being: regular sleep, a healthy diet, moderate drinking, monitoring each other’s checkups and health habits and compliance with doctor’s orders; (2) emotional support: In marriages that last, partners are usually assured a certain basic level of emotional sustenance. Married people recover better, manage chronic disease and experience boosts to their immune systems. Good marriages help people weather the storms and shocks of life; (3) financial support: The higher incomes of married men boost access to health care. The heavier commitment of marriage brings with it long-term concern over a spouse’s future well-being.
“Marriage exists in every known human society, bringing men and women together to create and to provide for the next generation of society, and it is not the right of any government anywhere to undermine or destroy it.”

United States Senator Jim Bunning (Republican-Kentucky), during 2004 debate on the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment

---

**CHART 3**

**International Marriage Comparisons, 2003**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>U.K.</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual marriages per thousand people</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual marriages per thousand unmarried adults</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of adult population currently married</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of adult population ever married</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remarriage (% of marriages in which the bride was previously married)</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 2002 marriages in which the bride was 35 years old or over</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


7. Rather than selection factors, marriage itself was responsible for at least 61 percent of the positive effect of marriage on the subjective well-being of married men and women. Even after controlling for respondents’ subjective well-being, a study estimated that marriage elevated life satisfaction by about four points, a statistically significant effect.


8. By the turn of the century, nearly 60 percent of adults were married, 10.4 percent separated or divorced, 6.6 percent were widowed, 19 percent were never married and 5.7 percent lived with a partner.

9. Married-couple households fell from nearly 80 percent in the 1950s to 50.7 percent by 2003. Since 1960, there has been an 850-percent increase in the number of unmarried couples living with children and families consisting of breadwinner dads and stay-at-home moms accounted for 10 percent of all households by 2003. “Unmarried America,” Business Week Online, (2003, 20 October).

CHART 4
Marriage Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1965</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of adults never married</td>
<td>18.2 million</td>
<td>48.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of total adult population</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of divorced adults</td>
<td>3.5 million</td>
<td>19.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of total adult population</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cohabitating adults</td>
<td>est: 300,000</td>
<td>11 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of total adult population</td>
<td>&gt; 1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of out-of-wedlock births</td>
<td>291,200</td>
<td>1.35 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of all births</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children in center-based, non-relative day care (ages 3-5)</td>
<td>est. 300,000</td>
<td>6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of all children (ages 3-5)</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married couple families with children present as percentage of all households</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


10. Contrary to media depictions, there was not a “surge” in the divorce rate among Americans age 65 or older.

11. Between 1970 and 2000, the rate of marriage dropped by about one-third, the out-of-wedlock birth ratio climbed from 11 percent to 33 percent of all births, the divorce rate doubled and the number of people living together outside of marriage grew by more than 1,000 percent.

12. Married couples tended to be more engaged in social and community activities. A disruption in marriage and family could cut civic engagement.

“Conjugal society is made by a voluntary compact between man and woman; and tho’ it consist chiefly in such a communion and right in one another’s bodies as is necessary to its chief end, procreation; yet it draws with it mutual support and assistance, and a communion of interests too, as necessary to their common off-spring, who have a right to be nourished, and maintained by them, till they are able to provide for themselves.”
13. Married persons were more committed than unmarried peers to volunteering, civic association membership, voting and religious participation. Parents were more likely than childless adults to volunteer for social service.

14. According to a survey by Pew Research Center, “More than two-thirds (69 percent) say that a child needs both a mother and father to grow up happily. Public opinion has remained steadfastly in favor of a home with a mom and a dad.” “Two-thirds (66 percent) of all respondents say that single women having children is bad for society, and nearly as many (59 percent) say the same about unmarried couples having children.” Pew Research Center “As Marriage and Parenthood Drift Apart, Public Is Concerned about Social Impact” (2007, 1 July).

15. “The state has a compelling public interest in the marriage of young adults. Marriage has beneficial social and health effects for both the married and their children, and these gifts also benefit immediate communities and all of society. … This would mean that our society would predictably have fewer children in foster care, less poverty, crime and drug abuse, and lower health care costs. These public gifts from marriage would translate into higher government revenues, lower government expenses, more citizen engagement and a more stable public order.”

16. Marriage is not only a private vow; it is a public act, a contract taken in full public view, enforceable by law and in the equally powerful court of public opinion. When you marry, the public commitment you make changes the way you think about yourself and your beloved; it changes the way you act and think about the future; and it changes how other people and other institutions treat you as well.
Marital Happiness

CHART 5

![Effect of Family Structure on Life Satisfaction: Australian Evidence](chart5.png)


17. Married people were more likely than those who were not married to be very happy. Forty-three percent of people who said they were very happy they were married, versus 24 percent of unmarried people saying they were very happy.


CHART 6

![Married People Are More Than Twice As Likely To Be Happy](chart6.png)

Marriage and parenting roles give individuals a sense of meaning and purpose. Marriage improves emotional well-being in part by giving people a sense that their life has meaning and purpose.


The General Social Survey regularly asks adults whether they are “very happy,” “pretty happy,” or “not too happy.” Married persons are twice as likely to report being very happy when compared with divorced or never-married adults.

18. Two-thirds of unhappily married spouses who stayed married reported that their marriages improved within five years. The most unhappy marriages reported the most dramatic turnarounds: among those who rated their marriages as “very unhappy,” almost eight out of 10 who avoided divorce were happily married five years later.


19. People who were married reported the highest levels of well-being, regardless of whether they were happily married or not. “Even when controlling for relationship happiness, being married was associated with higher self-esteem, greater life satisfaction, greater happiness and less distress.”


20. Men who are married to women who function in a more traditional role (homemaker) were more likely to spend “quality time” with their wives. These traditional wives also expressed greater satisfaction with their husbands’ emotional interaction with them.


21. Marital status and psychological well-being was statistically linked in an analysis of data from 19 countries. In nearly all countries, married men and women reported greater happiness and “overall life satisfaction” than unmarried and divorced peers. The divorced and separated were the least happy and the least satisfied.

22. Using a sample of 9,643 respondents from the National Survey of Households, it was found that the transition from marriage to separation or divorce was associated with an increase in depression, a decline in happiness, less personal mastery, less positive relations with others, and less self-acceptance. These associations were stronger for women than for men. Becoming married, on the other hand, was associated with a “considerable well-being boost” evident in both men and women.


23. In research where data was collected from adults over a 10-year period, married people reported that they were more satisfied with life than did unmarried people.


24. Children raised in intact families entered relationships without fear of failure gnawing at them. The children of divorce often sought partners who had been raised in stable intact families.


25. The high aspirations for a “soul mate” may be one reason why so many young adults are cohabiting before they marry. Among the young adults surveyed, 44 percent had at some time lived with an opposite-sex partner outside of marriage. Although young adults express high aspirations for the marital relationship, they see a diminished role for marriage in other domains. Many of the larger social, economic, religious and public purposes once associated with marriage are receding or missing altogether from their portrait of marriage.


Happiness is contagious for married couples. When a husband or wife is happy, that happiness extends to the spouse, too. It’s so strong that it can even supersede the non-financial cost of unemployment or a two-month hospitalization. A 30-percent increase in the spouse’s life satisfaction score from the previous year can completely offset the negative impact of unemployment on the respondent’s life satisfaction.

26. Among couples who married and stayed married, the per person net worth increased on average by 16 percent with each year of marriage. Compared to those who remained single, getting married increased one’s wealth, on average, by 93 percent.


27. Marriage in early adulthood doubled the odds of affluence. The cumulative incidence of affluence at age 45 was 33 percent for married versus 16 percent for non-married. Among older individuals, wedlock conferred an even more pronounced advantage: “42 percent of older married will experience affluence versus 18 percent among nonmarried…”


28. A highly publicized study of millionaires in the United States revealed the importance of marriage to financial success and stability. “Nearly 95 percent of millionaire households are composed of married couples.” These are individuals who have married once and remained married.

### Chart 8

**Welfare Dependence Dramatically Increases Outside of Marriage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share of Average Child's Life on Welfare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Intact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent Divorce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never-Married Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Wedlock Birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-Wedlock Birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An average child born and raised outside of marriage will receive some type of means-tested welfare aid (AFDC; food stamps; Medicaid; Woman, Infants, and Children [WIC] food subsidy; or Supplemental Security Income [SSI]) during 71 percent of his childhood. By contrast, an average child born and raised by both parents in an intact marriage will receive welfare during 12 percent of his childhood years.

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1979-96

---

29. Individuals who were not continuously married had significantly less household wealth than those who remained married throughout life. Average household wealth of unmarried adults was 63 percent lower than that of married adults. Within the category of unmarrieds, this reduction difference was 77 percent for the separated, 75 percent for the never-married, 73 percent for the divorced, 58 percent for the cohabiting and 45 percent for widows. The reduction difference was 86 percent for unmarried women and 61 percent for unmarried men.


30. Married men earned more than single men by about 15 percent when education, work experience, race, occupation and industry were considered. Married men also established higher income goals to support their wives and families. “Married men are more likely to quit with a new job in hand, less likely to quit without having found a new job and less likely to be terminated involuntarily.”

31. Married parents were significantly less likely to be poor. According to a study by economist Robert Lerman, poverty rates for married couples were half those of cohabiting couple parents and one-third that of noncohabiting single parents in households with other adults.


32. Married men earned more money than single men with similar education and job histories. For men, marriage reaped as many benefits as education.


33. The economic benefits of marriage are not limited to the middle class; some 70 percent of never-married mothers would be able to escape poverty if they were married to the father of their children.


34. If enough marriages had taken place to return the incidence of single parenting to 1970 levels, and the incomes of the men and women were combined, the poverty rate among children in 1998 would have fallen by about a third.

35. Poor parents who married gained economic advantage from marriage. Though marriage itself may not lift a family out of poverty, it may reduce economic hardship. This effect occurs because marriage, especially if it is long-lasting, allows couples to pool earnings, to recruit support from a larger social network of family, friends and community members, to share risks, and to mitigate the disruptions of job loss, loss of job benefits or loss of earnings due to absenteeism, illness, reduced hours on the job or layoffs.


36. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 6.6 percent of married couples with children lived below the poverty level, while 17.4 percent of non-family householders and 34.3 percent of female-only parent households with children lived in poverty.


37. Divorce and unmarried childbearing increase child poverty. The majority of children who grew up outside of married families had experienced at least one year of dire poverty.


CHART 9

Nearly 80 Percent of All Children Suffering Long-Term Poverty Come from Broken or Never-Married Families

This chart shows the percentage of all children who experience long-term poverty in each of four categories: Within Wedlock/Marriage Intact – children born to married parents who remain married through the child’s life; Within Wedlock/Subsequent Divorce– children born to married parents who later divorce; Out-of-Wedlock/Subsequent Marriage - children born outside marriage whose mothers marry after birth; and Out-of-Wedlock/Never-Married Mother - children born outside marriage whose mother never married.

The poverty rate for all children in married-couple families was 8.2 percent. By contrast, the poverty rate for all children in single-parent families was four times higher at 35.2 percent.


Courtesy of The Heritage Foundation
38. A child born and raised outside marriage was six times more likely to receive welfare aid than a child raised in an intact, married family. Each year, federal and state governments spent more than $200 billion on means-tested aid for low-income families with children through programs such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, food stamps, public housing, the earned income tax credit and Medicaid. Of this total, some 75 percent ($150 billion) went to single-parent families.


39. The median income of married-parent households whose heads have only a high school diploma was 10 percent higher than the median income of college-educated, single-parent households. Parents who are college graduates and married were the economic elite.


40. For every $1,000 that government spent providing services to broken families, it spent $1 dollar trying to stop family breakdown. In return, society received for its “investment” broken families, troubled children and increased social problems.


41. Researchers reasoned that marriage fostered the accumulation of wealth because “it provides institutionalized protection, which generates economies of scale, task specialization and access to work-related fringe benefits, which lead to rewards like broader social networks and higher savings rates.” High divorce rates could lead to “serious implications for aging individuals, their families and public policies for retirement saving incentives and income maintenance programs.”

42. Using data from the 1998 Survey of Consumer Finances, researchers found that compared to single male-head households, single female-head households or cohabiting households, married households:
   • had higher median incomes
   • were more likely to own a business, nonresidential real estate, a vacation home and have savings bonds
   • were more likely to have received an inheritance
   • carried less debt relative to their assets
   • have greater net worth overall.

43. It is likely that married men benefit from specialization within marriage and from the emotional support they receive from their wives. It is also likely that married men’s domestic routines and health habits reduce job absenteeism, quit rates and sick days. And it may be that men’s role obligation to provide for others gives them a greater sense of purpose and intensifies their commitment to work.

44. “Over time, lower rates of marriage and high rates of divorce lead to fewer highly productive workers. The eventual result is either a labor shortage of skilled, motivated workers and/or an increased demand to import disciplined, productive workers from abroad to compensate for the domestic shortfall.

Married individuals were seven times more likely to own a home than single individuals and nearly twice (80 percent) more likely to own stocks. Divorced individuals were a third (32 percent) less likely to own a home compared to single individuals.

45. Productivity gains are disrupted when marital status changes. In a study of young adult workers, husbands earned on average $11.33 per hour, single men earned $10.38 and divorced and separated men earned $9.61 (in 1989 dollars).


46. Researchers estimate that $6.5 billion is lost per year by American businesses due to decreased productivity stemming from marriage and relationship difficulties.

Growing numbers of young people, often from broken homes or so-called dysfunctional families, are committing murder, rape, robbery, kidnapping and other violent acts.


47. Married mothers were less likely to suffer abuse than never-married mothers. In fact, even when the very high rates of abuse of separated and divorced mothers were added into the statistic, the rates of abuse among mothers who had ever been married were still lower than the rates of abuse among women who had never married and those who were cohabiting. Among mothers who were currently married or had ever been married, the rate of abuse was 38.5 per 1,000 mothers. Among mothers who have never been married the rate was 81 per 1,000 mothers.

Compared to peers in intact families, adolescent boys whose parents had broken up were significantly more likely to commit a wide range of offenses, including destroying property, getting drunk, stealing merchandise and assaulting classmates. “Delinquency tended to be higher among boys whose parents had divorced or separated.”


48. For both men and women, divorced or separated persons were subjected to the highest rates of intimate partner victimization, followed by never married persons. The rate of non-lethal intimate partner violence by marital status (per 1,000 persons) for the period 1993-1998 was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/separated</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


49. Married women in traditional families experienced the lowest rate of violence compared with women in other types of relationships. Women were four times more likely to be victims of domestic violence in a lesbian household than in a married household. Claire Renzetti, Violent Betrayal (London: SAGE, 1995). “Violence Between Intimates,” Bureau of Justice Statistics Selected Findings, (November 1994): 2. The incidence of domestic violence among homosexual men is nearly double that in the heterosexual population.

50. Stably-married couples have the lowest rates of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) with an incidence of 16.2 percent for overall IPV and 3.5 percent for IPV involving “physical violence with injury.” Cohabiting couple rate runs more than twice as high for overall IPV (37.5 percent) and for “physical violence with injury” the rate was four times as high (16.1 percent). Though the incidence of overall and severe IPV does run higher among newly-married or remarried couples (overall IPV 18.7 percent and 7.0 percent for “physical violence with injury”), it still is far below that observed among cohabiting couples.


51. An analysis of 50 separate studies of juvenile crime revealed that the prevalence of delinquency in broken homes was 10-15 percent higher than in intact homes. In addition, there were no appreciable differences in the impact of broken homes between girls and boys or between black youth and white youth.


52. A study of adolescents convicted of homicide in adult court found that at the time of the crimes, 42.9 percent of their parents had never been married, 29.5 percent were divorced and 8.9 percent were separated. Less than 20 percent of these children were from married parent households.


53. States with a lower percentage of single-parent families, on average, had lower rates of juvenile crime. State-by-state analysis indicated that, in general, a 10-percent increase in the number of children living in single-parent homes (including divorces) accompanied a 17-percent increase in juvenile crime.

54. There was a drastic increase in the number of incarcerations among women over the last three decades of the 20th century. Nearly half of the women in state prisons and local jails had never been married. Another one-third of women in state prison and local jails were divorced or separated, compared to just 17 percent of prison inmates who were married.


55. Criminals capable of sustaining marriage gradually moved away from a life of crime after they got married.


56. Being married is associated with an average reduction of approximately 35 percent in the odds of crime compared to nonmarried states for the same man.

57. Marriage -- especially if low-conflict and long-lasting -- was a source of economic, educational and social advantage for most children. Researchers agreed that, except in cases of high and unremitting parental conflict, children who grew up in households with their married mother and father did better on a wide range of economic, social, educational and emotional measures than the children raised in other kinds of family arrangements.


58. “Having a child outside of marriage virtually guarantees a teenage woman and her children a life of poverty, low education, low expectations and low achievement. It gradually puts in place the conditions which foster rejection and, ultimately, crime.”

Studies consistently showed that children in two-parent families were significantly less likely to drop out of high school than children in a one-parent family.


59. Adolescents from intact two-parent (mother/father) families were less likely to be suspended or expelled from school, less likely to commit delinquent crimes, less likely to be reported for problem behaviors at school, less likely to receive low grades in two or more subjects and more likely to score well on standard tests of cognitive development.


60. Students who were living with both parents (mother/father) in an intact family had consistently higher reading and math scores than their peers from other living arrangements. Socioeconomic factors reduced, but did not account for this correlation.


61. “[A]dolescents living with their continuously married biological parents have significantly lower behavioral problem scores compared to all other family types, even controlling for maternal and adolescent
Impact on Children continued

background characteristics.”

62. Children in single-mother homes were less like to complete high school, attend or graduate from college than either children in intact married (mother/father) families or children in widowed families -- including after controlling for race, gender and maternal education.

63. In studies involving more than 25,000 children, those who lived with only one parent had lower grade-point averages, lower college aspirations, lower attendance records and higher dropout rates than students who lived with both parents. Adolescents who had lived apart from one of their parents during some period of childhood were twice as likely to drop out of high school and one-and-one-half times as likely to be “idle” -- out of school or out of work -- in their late teens and early 20s.

Children living with cohabiting mothers had the lowest academic ratings and highest school behavior problems, a ranking that persisted after economic resource and parental behavior differences were controlled.

64. Children who lived with their biological parents had fewer behavior problems and experienced better general adjustment in school than children who lived with divorced parents or with a mother who had re-married. Children in intact families achieved higher grades and engaged in fewer problem behaviors than peers in single-parent or step-families.


CHART 15

Mental and Physical Health

65. A major population-based study in Sweden concluded that children living in one-parent homes had more than double the risk of psychiatric disease such as severe depression or schizophrenia, suicide or attempted suicide and alcohol-related disease. Girls were three times more likely to have drug problems and boys four times more likely, compared to children living in two-parent homes. These findings remained after the scholars controlled for a wide range of demographic and socioeconomic variables. Because Sweden has a comprehensive system that eliminates the economic and material consequences of growing up in one-parent homes, these problems cannot be attributed to poverty.

“Children should be seen as a hope for the future rather than part of a problem. A government makes a very hopeful statement when its policies invest in children’s lives and in marriage — humanity’s most pro-child institution.”

Jenny Tyree, Associate Marriage Analyst for Focus on the Family Action

66. Young adults of divorced parents reported significantly more distress in their childhoods than counterparts with married parents. They were more than three times more likely to report having “harder childhoods than most people” and tended to wish their father had spent more time with them. One in three in this group said they wondered if their fathers really loved them, a rate three times higher than that of students with married parents. Young people were disturbed even many years after a divorce.


67. Higher levels of anxiety among children and adolescents in the 1990s, compared to the 1950s, were related to changes in the divorce rate, the birth rate and the crime rate. As divorce and crime rates climbed, as birth rates dropped and as increasing numbers of Americans began to live alone, anxiety levels among children skyrocketed.

After controlling for maternal characteristics and background characteristics, adolescents living with both biological parents who were continuously married exhibited lower levels of problem behavior than peers from any other family type.


68. An analysis of child abuse cases in a nationally-representative sample of 42 countries found that children from single-parent families were more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse than children who lived with both biological parents. Compared to their peers living with both parents, children living in single-parent homes faced:

- 77 percent greater risk of being physically abused;
- 87 percent greater risk of being harmed by physical neglect;
- 165 percent greater risk of experiencing notable physical neglect;
- 74 percent greater risk of suffering from emotional neglect;
- 80 percent greater risk of suffering from serious injury or harm as a result of abuse or neglect;
- Overall, 120 percent greater risk of being endangered by some type of child abuse or neglect.


CHART 17

69. On average, children reared in married-parent families were less vulnerable to serious emotional illness, depression and suicide than children in non-intact families.

The more often teenagers have dinner with their parents, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use illegal drugs. Compared with teens who have frequent family dinners, those who have dinner with their families only two nights per week or less are at double the risk of substance abuse.

families. For instance, children in single-parent homes were more likely to be in the lower half of their class and have significantly more developmental and behavioral problems. Children in two-parent families experienced just half the developmental delay that children in single-parent families face.


73. In Sweden and Finland, the break-up of a family and a single-parent background had negative effects on mental and general health of the children and was associated with deaths in young adults.


74. Vulnerability to eating disorders ran twice as high among young women with unmarried parents than it did among peers with married mothers and fathers.


**PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

75. Married fathers can exercise an abiding, important and positive influence on their children and are especially likely to do so in a happy marriage.


76. The physical presence of a biological father is important for the sexual development of girls. Girls who live apart from their biological father develop sexually at earlier ages than girls who live with their biological

77. Marriage made a difference for parent-child relationships. In one nationally representative study, 30 percent of young adults whose parents divorced reported poor relationships with their mothers, compared to 16 percent of children whose parents stayed married. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of young adults with divorced parents reported poor relationships with their fathers, compared with 29 percent of young adults from non-divorced homes. Forty percent of the children of divorce had received psychological help, and 25 percent had dropped out of school. Nicholas Zill, Donna Morrison and Mary Jo Coiro, “Long-Term Effects of Parental Divorce on Parent-Child Relationships, Adjustment, and Achievement in Young Adulthood,” Journal of Family Psychology 7(1) (1993): 91-103.

78. Biological children of cohabiting parents consistently received smaller investments from their fathers than biological children of married parents. After controlling for ways that married and unmarried fathers differed, as well as demographic factors, statistically significant correlations showed that unmarried fathers spent about four hours less per week with their children than their married peers. Robin Fretwell Wilson, “Evaluating Marriage: Does Marriage Matter to the Nurturing of Children?” San Diego Law Review 42 (2005): 848-881.

79. Marriage strengthened the bonds between fathers and their children. Married men were more involved and had better relationships with their children than unwed or divorced fathers. In part, this was because married fathers shared the same residence with their children. But it was also because the role of husband encourages men to voluntarily take responsibility for their own children. Paternity by itself does not seem to accomplish the same transformation in men’s lives. Steven Nock, “Marriage in Men’s Lives,” (N.Y: Oxford University Press, 1998); David Popenoe, “Life Without Father: Compelling New Evidence That Fatherhood and Marriage Are Indispensable for the Good of Children and Society,” (New York: The Free Press, 1996).
When a young child (typically 18-24 months of age) begins to show a deep need to understand and make sense of his/her sexual embodiment, the child's relationship with mother and father become centrally important. Both the same-sex parent and the opposite-sex parent play vital roles as gender identity continues to develop and is deeply influential throughout the life cycle.


Compared with children from traditional families, children from nontraditional families showed more psychological problems as rated by their parents and more internalizing behavior as rated by their teachers. Boys from nontraditional families were especially at a disadvantage; they showed lower self-concept, more externalizing, poorer classroom behavior and lower grade-point averages. Girls from such families were less popular with peers.


Only about 60 percent of U.S. children were living with their own biological (or adoptive) married parents. “What is America’s Most Pressing Social Problem?” Center for Marriage and Families, American Institute of Values, Fact Sheet No. 1 (2006, February). In 1970, only 12 percent of families with children were headed by a single mother. By 2003, that share had more than doubled, to 26 percent. From 1970 to 2003, the number of single-father households increased six-fold.


Fifty-two percent of births to unmarried women in 2001 occurred within a cohabiting relationship. Highly educated women were much less likely to give birth outside of marriage: 7 percent of women with a college degree or higher gave birth outside marriage, compared with 53 percent of women with a high school diploma.


Teens from two-parent homes were significantly more involved in constructive use of time through groups, sports and religious organizations than teens from single-parent homes.

85. The special capacities of mothers seem to have deep biological underpinnings. During pregnancy and breastfeeding, women experience high levels of the hormone peptide oxytocin, which fosters affiliative behaviors. 

86. Infants of married mothers were more likely to be securely attached than those of cohabiting or single mothers, even after controlling for age, ethnicity and education.

87. Married mothers showed greater psychological well-being and reported less ambivalence and conflict, and greater love and intimacy in their relationships with their partners than cohabiting or single mothers. They also believed in more progressive child rearing ideas and were less likely to believe in benefits for child development from maternal employment.

88. A national study on drug abuse found that adolescents ages 12-17 who lived with their married biological parents were the least likely to use illicit drugs. Adolescents who lived with their father only or with their father and step-mother were the most likely to use marijuana or other illicit drugs.

89. High school students who reported heavy episodic drinking were disproportionately “older, male, from families that receive welfare benefits, are not living in intact mother/father families, are attending religious services less often, and are more likely to have delinquent friends than those who have not drunk heavily in the month prior to the survey.”
90. Marriage was associated with better health across all major health domains and across all types of conditions within health domains. Of the non-married groups, divorcees had the worst overall health profiles. Divorce had even more deleterious health consequences for women than for men.


91. Being unmarried significantly increased the hazard of dying for both men and women. For both sexes, the hazard of mortality fell significantly with marital duration. For men, there was a large initial drop in the risk of dying after the wedding, followed by an additional, gradually accumulating benefit of marriage duration. The conclusion was that, for women, the greatest benefit from marriage was accumulated over time.


92. “Marriage promotes better health habits and greater longevity among men, largely due to the care, attention and monitoring by their wives. In fact, men appear to reap the most physical health benefits from marriage and suffer the greatest health consequences when they divorce. Once married, men are also less likely to hang out with male friends, to spend time at bars, to abuse alcohol or drugs or to engage in illegal activities. They are more likely than unmarried men to attend religious services regularly, to join faith groups...
and to spend time with relatives. In brief, men settle down when they get married.”

MORTALITY RATES
93. Compared to men living with a wife (or partner) and their children, fathers living alone -- without spouse (or partner) and apart from their children -- experienced “almost four times as great a risk of all-cause mortality, 10 times of death from external violence, 13 times from fall and poisoning, almost five times from suicide and 19 times from addiction.” When controlling for health-selections effects and differences in socioeconomic status, researchers found “significantly elevated risks” remained for men living without a spouse (or partner) and for men living without children.

94. Singleness was one of a number of important “psychosocial predictors of premature mortality.”

95. Unmarried individuals had higher rates of mortality than married people -- about 50 percent higher for women and 250 percent higher for men. Married people had better physical health and psychological well-being than divorced, separated, never-married or widowed people.

96. Researchers identified marital status as a reason for the black-white gap in mortality rates. Blacks were more likely to be in the non-married category than whites, and those who never married had almost twice the mortality risk of those who had married.
97. Married women reported the best physical and psychological health. Formerly married women reported the worst health, with never-married women falling between these two groups. Compared with unmarried women, married women had less job stress, environment stress, child stress, financial stress and relationship stress.


98. A wide body of social science literature characterized marriage as a powerful protector of public health. Children raised by their own two married parents lived longer, had fewer illnesses and accidents and enjoyed better health than children raised outside of intact marriages. Both men and women who stay married enjoyed powerful health advantages: longer lives, better health, better-managed chronic illness, less likely to require extensive (and expensive) hospitalization and nursing home care and became disabled less often than single or divorced people.


99. A study showed that married persons were less likely to have high blood pressure than the divorced, widowed and separated. Nonmarried adults were at higher risks of hypertension because of low social support, social isolation and reduced economic resources. The study found the following rates of high blood pressure among the different groups:

- Married and living with spouse: 8.5%
- Widowed: 12.8%
- Divorced: 13.3%
- Separated: 14%


100. People who said they were happily married had much higher levels of antibodies (which increase disease-fighting capability) in the blood than those who reported lower marital satisfaction. Immune responses...
were not related to other health factors such as smoking, alcohol intake, sleep, exercise or diet.


101. Divorced people suffered from more health problems than married people, even when taking into account differences in “age, sex, educational level, degree of urbanization, religion and country of birth.” The divorced were significantly more likely to suffer from chronic illnesses, more likely to voice “subjective health complaints,” and more likely to claim work disability benefits and to report “less than good” perceived general health. The never-married reported health conditions that were between that of the married and the divorced. Although they were more likely to claim work disability benefits than the married, the widowed “do not differ significantly from the married in their perceived general health and subjective health complaints.”


102. Marriage was associated with better health and longer life spans. A marriage rife with conflict and stress, however, can reduce these benefits. Hostility reduces a body’s ability to heal. “[A] bad marriage is particularly risky, because your major source of support becomes your major source of stress, and you can’t easily look for a replacement.”


103. Elderly patients without a spouse end up in lower quality hospitals and then require hospital care much longer than peers who have a spouse. “Marriage may provide the interpersonal resources necessary to develop and execute a better algorithm for care seeking.” Elderly patients with spouses “have shorter lengths of stay” in the hospital. “As the fraction of the elderly population that is married declines, the impact of marital status on health care choices could be quite important....”


[D]ivorce without remarriage, or long lasting cohabitation without formal marriage, reduces the lifetime sum of subjective well-being by 4-12 percent for both men and women.”

Better Physical Health/Longer Lives
continued

104. An American Academy of Pediatrics task force concluded that “marriage is beneficial in many ways.” People behave differently when they are married. “They have healthier lifestyles, eat better and mother each other’s health. Being part of a couple and a family also increases the number of people and social institutions with which an individual has contact, this ... increases the likelihood that the family will be a successful one.”


CANCER

105. Studies revealed that “every type of terminal cancer strikes divorced individuals ... more frequently than it does married people.” Divorced males died by more than double the incidence of respiratory cancer, a fourfold increase in buccal cavity and pharynx cancer and a more than 50-percent increase in cancer of the digestive organs and peritoneum of the urinary organs. Deaths by genital cancer more than doubled for divorced white females. Premature death rates, defined as occurring between the ages of 15 and 64, “are significantly higher from a number of diseases among divorced men and women compared to married persons the same sex and age.”


106. A review of more than 130 empirical studies from the 1930s to 1990 indicated that married people generally lived longer, were more emotionally and physically healthy, happier and more likely to recover from cancer than unmarried people.


107. Married persons lived longer and experienced lower mortality rates for cancer, in comparison with single, separated, widowed or divorced persons. Married persons with cancer tended to be diagnosed earlier, received more frequent curative treatment and were more likely to survive.

108. Marital status had a significant impact on survival from 12 common types of cancer, with the exception of uterine cancer and leukemia. Mortality was 15 percent higher for never-married men, never-married women and divorced men, compared with their married peers. Mortality among previously-married cancer patients (including divorced women and widowed men and women) was 7 percent higher than for their married counterparts.


109. Using data from 48 states, researchers calculated that never-married white women were 27 percent more likely to smoke than married peers. Divorced or separated white women were 99 percent more likely to smoke than married peers. Never-married white men were 20 percent more likely to smoke and divorced or separated white men were 91 percent more likely to smoke than married peers.


110. In a study of mothers incarcerated for drug offenses, 69 percent were single, 17 percent were either separated, divorced or widowed and 14 percent were either married or in a long-term relationship. Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of drug-abusing mothers were born to “natural parents [who] had either separated or had never lived together.”


111. Divorced and single women were statistically more likely to engage in binge drinking than married peers. Married women were less likely to display depressive symptomology, and they felt safer than their single peers.

112. Divorced women were more likely to test positive for any drug (15.1 percent versus 9.6 percent). Tests for cocaine use showed that the prevalence of use was almost twice as high among divorced women (1.5 percent) and single women (1.6 percent) as among married women (0.8 percent).


Although men were the clear beneficiaries of marriage in this regard, married women were nearly one-third less likely to report drinking problems than divorced women.

113. Married adults were more likely to be mentally healthy, while suffering fewer limitations in daily activities and missing fewer days of work than unmarrieds.

114. Continuously married people experienced better emotional health and less depression than never-married, remarried, divorced or widowed people. Getting married for the first time significantly increased a person’s emotional well-being.

115. Because of “the therapeutic benefit of marriage,” rates for alcoholism, suicide, schizophrenia and other psychiatric problems run lower among married men and women than among their unmarried peers. Married people enjoyed “continuous companionship with a spouse who provides interpersonal closeness, emotional gratification and support in dealing with daily stress.”
116. Marriage was associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms in both Japan and the United States. This study underscored the importance of spousal presence in mitigating the expression of depressive symptoms -- even in a vertical society such as Japan.


117. Psychologists found that, compared to married peers, unmarried mothers (19 percent) were almost four times more likely than married mothers (5 percent) to have experienced a depressive episode in the year prior to the interview. Never-married mothers were 3.1 times more likely than married mothers and separated or divorced mothers and 4.6 times more likely than married mothers to have experienced an episode of depression.


118. A study found “that marriage continues to be beneficial for mental health.” Canadian men and women in a stable marriage experienced “significantly lower levels of distress relative to those who remain single, separated or divorced.” In the short term, the psychological distress brought about by change in marital status impacted men and women equally.

Lisa Stronschein, Peggy McDonough, Georges Monette and Qing Shao, “Marital Transitions and Mental Health: Are There Gender Differences in the Short-Term Effects of Marital Status Change?” Social Science & Medicine 61 (2005): 2,293-2,303.

119. Divorced women, compared to married women, experienced more frequent and serious depression.

120. Single mothers were more than twice as likely to have sought help for mental health concerns in the previous 12 months as married mothers. Researchers found that 6.4 percent of married mothers suffered from affective disorders, compared to 14.8 percent of single mothers.


121. Young adults who stayed married experienced less depression and fewer alcohol problems than those who remained single.


122. Those who were married experienced a decrease in symptoms of depression, while those who separated from or divorced their spouse experienced an increase in depression.


123. Compared with single women, married women had the lowest rates of suicide. In addition, suicide rates among married women with children ran far lower -- in all age groups -- than among childless married women. Parenthood was an important factor in suicide prevention, and suicide protection increased with the number of children.


124. The married full-time mother was at less risk of mental disorders than lone mothers, both working and not working. Marriage reduced the risk of mental disorders, compared to lone mothers. When a range of types of mental disorders were considered, marriage reduced the risk of mental disorders for both men and women.

Rising suicide rates in Quebec between 1961 and 1986 were associated with “a sharp decline in the rate of marriage, a rise in the average age at first marriage, increased cohabitation outside of legal marriage, rising divorce propensities, a precipitous decline in fertility and a significant rise in the labor force participation of women.” A significant, positive relationship was found between the incidence of divorce and suicide among both men and women. Compared to average suicide rates between 1931 to 1956 (3.45 per 100,000 women; 10.9 per 100,000 men), average suicide rates doubled between 1961 and 1986 (9.72 per 100,000 women; 22.0 per 100,000 men).


Compared to single peers, married college students were approximately 30 percent less likely to seriously contemplate suicide. “The single most protective factor [from seriously attempting suicide] was being married.”


After adjusting for socioeconomic and demographic variables, higher risks of suicide were found in divorced than in married persons. Divorced and separated persons were more than twice as likely to commit suicide as married persons. Marital status, especially divorce, had strong net effect on mortality from suicide, but only among men. Divorced men were nearly 2.5 times more likely to die from suicide than married men. The effect of divorce on suicide risk may be attributable to absence of social integration and increased psychological distress.

Over a five-year period, compared to individuals who remained married, those who became divorced, separated or widowed reported more depressive symptoms. The effects of divorce on depression appeared to be more significant for women than it was for men.

Marital Sex Life

130. Researchers reported growing evidence linking marital and relationship intimacy to better health, including stronger immune systems. Conversely, relationships in turmoil appeared to weaken the immune system.


131. Married couples who practiced fidelity reported the most positive feelings about sex; they felt cared for, loved, satisfied and wanted. They were the least likely to experience sadness, being anxious or worried, afraid or scared or feeling guilty about sex.


132. Married women enjoyed their sex lives more than sexually active single or cohabiting women, a finding that researchers attributed to women’s greater trust and expectation of marital monogamy and permanence. Marriage also makes for happier mothers. Compared to cohabiting mothers or single mothers, married mothers were more likely to receive the cooperation, hands-on help, emotional support and positive involvement from their child’s father and his kin. Having practical and emotional support reduced maternal stress, anxiety and depression and enhanced a mother’s ability to parent effectively.


133. Married men with and without children had significantly lower evening testosterone than unmarried men. Among married men without children, higher scores on a “spousal investment” measure and more hours spent with a man’s wife on his last day off from work were both associated with lower testosterone levels. This suggests that lower testosterone levels during the day among fathers facilitated paternal care in humans by decreasing the likelihood that a father would engage in competitive and/or mating behavior.

Peter Gray, Sonya Kahlenberg, Emily Barrett, Susan Lipson and Peter Ellison,
134. Marriage was rated more highly by virgins or people who had only one sex partner than non-virgins, especially those who had multiple sex partners.

135. Compared to those who had never divorced, men and women who had divorced or legally separated were twice as likely to have an extramarital affair.

136. Once married, the vast majority of people had no other sexual partner. That 80 percent of adult Americans ages 18 to 59 had zero or one sex partner in a given year reflected the fact that most Americans in that broad age range were married and faithful. Married people were also fulfilled; 88 percent reported enjoying great sexual pleasure and 85 percent great emotional satisfaction.

137. Over the whole length of a marriage, about 25 percent of men and 10-15 percent of women reported having had sex with someone other than their spouse.

138. A pattern of “high fidelity” was documented among married Americans. “The vast majority reported having only one sexual partner during the previous 30 days (98.8 percent), 12 months (96.3 percent) and five years (93.6 percent). Consequently, “most people were not placing themselves or their partners at high risk for exposure” to AIDS.
Women who had more non-marital sexual partners were less likely to have stable marriages. More than 80 percent of the women who had never had a non-marital partner were in stable marriages at the time of the survey (i.e., they were in a marriage that had lasted at least five years). By contrast, only 30 percent of the women who had five non-marital sexual partners were in stable marriages.


139. About 40 percent of married people had sex twice a week, compared to 20-25 percent of single and cohabitating men and women. More than 40 percent of married women said their sex life was emotionally and physically satisfying, compared to about 30 percent of single women. For men, 50 percent of married men were physically and emotionally content versus 38 percent of cohabitating men.

Building Strong Marriages

CHART 21

Canadians’ Criteria for Choosing A Mate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faithfulness</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Nice</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes Children</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically Attractive</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


140. Ten important research findings on marriage and choosing a marriage partner:

a) Marrying as a teenager is the highest known risk factor for divorce.
b) The most likely way to find a future marriage partner is through an introduction by family, friends or acquaintances.
c) The more similar people are in their values, backgrounds and life goals, the more likely they are to have a successful marriage.
d) Women have a significantly better chance of marrying if they do not become single parents before marrying.
e) Both women and men who are college educated are more likely to marry and less likely to divorce than people with lower levels of education.
f) Living together before marriage has not proved useful as a “trial marriage.”
g) Marriage helps people to generate income and wealth.
h) People who are married are more likely to have emotionally and physically satisfying sex lives than single people or those who just live together.
i) People who grow up in a family broken by divorce are slightly less likely to marry and much more likely to divorce when they do marry.
j) For large segments of the population, the risk of divorce is far below 50 percent.

David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, From the National Marriage Project’s Ten Things to Know Series, (2004, November).

Community Marriage Policies in 114 cities sparked a net decline of the divorce rate of 17.5 percent over seven years. These numbers indicated that programs with wide spreads in effective implementation can positively impact the divorce rate and bring about more stable and healthy marriages.

“Assessing the Impact of Community Marriage Policies on U.S. County Divorce Rates” by the Institute for Research and Evaluation of Salt Lake City, Released 5 April 5, 2004 at the National Press Club.
Building Strong Marriages
continued

141. A meta-analytic review indicated that those who participated in a marriage education program were significantly better off afterward than 79 percent of people who did not participate.

142. A meta-analysis of 16 studies of one of the oldest marriage-enhancement programs, Couple Communication, observed meaningful program effects with regard to all types of measures. Couples that took the training experienced “clinically relevant positive outcomes” -- moderate to large gains in communication skills, marital satisfaction and other relationship qualities.

143. The No. 1 predictor of divorce is the habitual avoidance of conflict. Successful couples are those who know how to discuss their differences in ways that actually strengthen their relationship and improve intimacy. Successful couples don’t let their disagreements spill over and contaminate the rest of the relationship.

144. “Lack of commitment,” “too much conflict and arguing” and “infidelity” were listed as the three most common reasons for divorce.

145. Entering the marriage with any amount of debt was associated with lower levels of marital adjustment and marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives in this study. The researchers looked at four types of debt: education, medical, credit card and auto loan. Of the four types of debt, credit card and automobile loan debt had the highest correlations with lower marital satisfaction and adjustments scores, for both husband and wife.

Among people with unusually poor marital success were those who had little education, little or no religiosity, who lived in the South and West, whose parents divorced before they were age 16 (females only), who lived with their spouses before marrying and who married before age 20.

Building Strong Marriages
continued

146. Wives with more traditional sex-role attitudes were less likely to divorce.

147. While female employment was generally associated with a higher risk of relationship dissolution -- whether couples were married or cohabiting -- women who worked in a family business or who worked in their homes were no more likely to experience relationship dissolution than women who did not work. Specifically, female employment outside of a family setting weakened marriage.

148. College-age couples who held traditional gender roles were much more likely to make enduring marriages than couples who subscribed to egalitarian precepts. Traditional women were more likely than other women to marry their college sweetheart and to stay married to him during the 15-year period of study. Forty-three percent of traditionalist women married their college boyfriend, and none of these marriages ended in divorce. In contrast, only 26 percent of egalitarian women married their boyfriend and half of these marriages ended in divorce.

149. Among the dimensions of compatibility for forming successful marriage relationships are the core personal dimensions: intellect, similar energy levels, spirituality, education, appearance, sense of humor, mood management, traditional versus nontraditional personalities, ambition, sexual passion, artistic passion, values, industry, curiosity, vitality and security and autonomy versus closeness.

150. Among the dimensions of compatibility for forming successful marriage relationships are skills that can be developed: communication, conflict resolution, sociability, adaptability, kindness and dominance versus submissiveness.
151. The background characteristics of people entering a marriage have major implications for their risk of divorce. Following are some percentage point decreases in the risk of divorce or separation during the first 10 years of marriage, according to various personal and social factors:

- **Annual income over $50,000** (vs. under $25,000) -30 percent
- **Having a baby seven months or more after marriage** (vs. before marriage) -24 percent
- **Marrying over 25 years of age** (vs. under 18) -24 percent
- **Own family of origin intact** (vs. divorced parents) -14 percent
- **Religious affiliation** (vs. none) -14 percent
- **Some college** (vs. high school dropout) -13 percent


152. The things people need for a happy marriage are on the inside, like character and intellect, rather than the shape of their love one’s nose. Those who succeed at marriage are usually paired with someone who shares most of their basic values and beliefs. It is said that opposites attract, but that’s not so. When people have a lot in common, they have much less to negotiate, fewer things to compromise on.


153. The five key characteristics of happily married couples are that they have greater skills in the areas of communication, flexibility, closeness, personality compatibility and conflict resolution.

D. H. Olson, National Survey of Marital Strengths.

154. Every happy, successful married couple has approximately 10 areas of “incompatibility” or disagreement that they will never resolve. Instead, they learn how to manage the disagreements and live life “around” them.

Building Strong Marriages

155. Ten characteristics of successful marriages:

a) Commitment: Divorce is not a considered an option;

b) Common Interests: Shared values and interests in: children, work, travel, goals, dependability and the desire to be together;

c) Communication: Openness about opinions and feelings (self-disclosure) where couples are willing to interact, trust and share;

d) Religiousity (high levels of religious commitment): A strong religious orientation provided couples with social, spiritual and emotional support;

e) Trust: Provided a stable foundation for security in marriage;

f) Finances and Work: Being non-materialistic -- valuing family and marriage over the accumulation of material goods. Practicing financial self-control and not spending beyond their means;

g) Role Models: Good marriages beget good marriages. Growing up in a happy parental marriage helped create good marriages for children;

h) Virtues: Individuals who develop good character make better husbands and wives, mothers and fathers;

i) Low Stress Levels: Low stress levels in one’s life are associated with marital quality; and

j) Sexual Desire: Sexual desire for one’s spouse expressed consistently through the life course.

“Marriage will continue to be important. We will continue to need someone who is permanently and unquestionably in our corner.”


Public Perceptions of Marriage

156. Ninety-four percent of survey respondents agreed that divorce is a serious national problem and 86 percent agreed that all couples considering marriage should get premarital counseling. A substantial majority (71 percent) disagreed with the statement that “either spouse should be allowed to terminate a marriage at any time for any reason.”

157. Eighty-four percent of people around the world agreed that “the definition of marriage is one man and one woman.”
Wirthlin Worldwide for The Howard Center and Brigham Young University, World Congress of Families II, (1999, November).

158. Eighty-six percent of the never-married survey respondents said they wanted to marry and 88 percent said that marriage should be a lifelong commitment. Most disagreed with the statement, “Marriage is an old-fashioned, outmoded institution” (88 percent). Eighty-nine percent agreed that it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father. Ninety-seven percent of married people expected to be married for life.

159. A majority of seniors thought that it was extremely important to have a good marriage and family life (76 percent). This figure had risen slightly since 1976, when it was 73 percent. Females were more likely to indicate that having a good marriage and family life was extremely important (81 percent for females and 70 percent for males).
“Life Goals: The percent of high school students who rated selected personal and social life goals as extremely important,” Human Services Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning & Evaluation.

160. Ninety-seven percent of married respondents said they expected to be married for life, and 93 percent said they would marry their spouses if they had it to do again. Seventy-three percent of all of the respondents agreed that “most married couples I know have happy, healthy marriages.”
161. Eighty-nine percent of survey respondents said that, all things being equal, it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father. Ninety-seven percent said that fathers are just as important as mothers for the proper development of children.


162. According to a nationally representative survey of young men, ages 25-34, young men from married-parent families were less likely to be divorced and more likely to be married. Among the never-married young men surveyed, those from married-parent families were more likely to express readiness to be married than young men from other kinds of family backgrounds. In addition, young men from married-parent households had more positive attitudes toward women, children and family life than men who grew up in non-intact families.


163. Many of the participants in a study favored marriage preparation and education as a way to prevent divorce, as well as unhappy marriages. They said they wanted to develop skills that would help them resolve problems that arise in marriage.


164. Fifty-five percent agreed that government should be involved in licensing marriage, and almost half (47 percent) agreed that laws should be changed so that divorces are more difficult to get.

Legal Precedent and Marriage

“[T]he state views marriage as the appropriate and desirable forum for procreation and the rearing of children. ... Marriage exists as a protected legal institution primarily because of societal values associated with the propagation of the human race.”

166. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court (1847) ruled that “the paramount purpose of marriage [is] the procreation and protection of legitimate children, the institution of families and the creation of natural relations among mankind from which proceed all the civilization, virtue and happiness to be found in the world.”
Matchin v. Matchin 6 pa. 332, 337 (1847).

167. The Supreme Court of Massachusetts (1862): “[O]ne of the leading and most important objects of the institution of marriage under our laws is the procreation of children, who shall with certainty be known by their parents as the pure offspring of their union.”

168. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State. Men and women of full age ... have the right to marry and to found a family.

169. “We are unwilling to hold that a right to same-sex marriage has taken hold to the point that it is implicit in the concept of ordered liberty or deeply rooted in the history and tradition of Maryland.”

170. “[A]lthough many traditional views of homosexuality have been recast over time in our state and Nation, the choice to marry a same-sex partner has not taken sufficient root to receive constitutional protection as a fundamental right.”
Harold Standhardt and Tod Keltner v. Maricopa County, Superior Court of the State of Arizona, (2003, 8 October).
Legal Precedent and Marriage

continued

171. “We are not unmindful of the fact that the relationships gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons seek to enter involve intimate and private decisions that extend to the core of the right to personal autonomy. Those decisions do not necessarily require us or the State to recognize formally those relationships in the form of State-sanctioned marriage. That a liberty interest such as the argued-for right to marry a person of the sex of one’s choosing, even if assumed to be important, does not render automatically fundamental that liberty interest.”


172. “When dealing in the realm of due process, furthermore, we are hesitant to recognize new fundamental [marriage] rights, especially when the Supreme Court has either failed or declined to do so.”


173. Upon signing the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, U.S. President William Clinton said: “I have long opposed governmental recognition of same-gender marriages, and this legislation is consistent with that position.”


“The institution of marriage has played a critical role both in defining the legal entitlements of family members and in developing the decentralized structure of our democratic society. In recognition of that role, and as part of their general overarching concern for serving the best interests of children, state laws almost universally express an appropriate preference for the formal family.”

Lehr v. Robertson, 463 U.S. 248, 256-57 (1983)
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