

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY FACTS - 2011

Marriage

- **85% of the U.S. population will marry at least once.** (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008)
- **Age at marriage has been on the increase for more than four decades.** *In 1960, the median age for a first marriage was 22.8 years for men and 20.3 for women. In 2010 the median age for first marriage was 28.2 years for men and 26 years for women.* (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010)
- **Over 75% of Americans reported a belief that “being married” is an important value** (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010)
- **Marriages among those with college degrees appear to be getting stronger, while marriages among those with a high school degree or less are becoming increasingly unstable and unhappy.** (Popenoe & Whitehead 2010)

Divorce

- **In 2008, there were 2.1 million marriages and approximately 1 million divorces.** (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2008) (NVSS, 2009)
- **23.2 million Americans—about 9.8% of the U.S. population—are currently divorced.** (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009)
- **People marrying today have a 40-50% chance of divorcing.** *Statistically, 40% of first marriages, 60% of second, and 73% of third marriages end in divorce.* (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006, Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010)
- **About 75% of those who divorce will eventually remarry.** (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008)
- **Of the marriages that survive divorce, the quality of some of those may be poor.** (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010)
- **After 10 years of marriage, it is predicted that only 25% of couples will still be happily married** (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010)
- **Most divorces involve children, and more than 1 million children are affected by divorce each year.** (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008)
- **Approximately 40% of children will experience divorce before adulthood** (Amato, 2007)
- **Women are more likely than men to file for divorce.** (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010)
- **Most adults adjust well to divorce over time. 30% feel their lives were negatively impacted.** (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002)
- **Divorce and unmarried child-bearing are highly related to child poverty** (Rank & Hirschl, 1999)
- **Divorce is very costly.** *An average divorce costs state and governments about \$30,000.* (Schramm, 2006)

The Marriage Index by Institute of American Values, 2009, was created to illustrate the state of marriage and it is based on five indicators all of which have shown a steady decline since 1970. The Marriage Index in 2008 was 60% from a high of 76% in 1970. The five indicators and their decline are indicated below. A similar analysis was done for African American marriages and they too experienced a steady decline.

- **The percentage of people 20-54 who are married has steadily declined.** *In 1970, 78% of adults were married; In 1980 69%; in 1990, 62%; and about 61% in 2000 and 57% in 2008. For African Americans, the percentage went from 70% to 40%.*

- **The percentage of married persons that are “very happy” has dropped to 57%.** *In 1970 and 1980 it was 67% and it dropped to 62% for 2000 and 2008. For African Americans, the percentage went from 54% to 51%.*
- **The percentage of intact first marriages has dropped to 61%.** *In 1970, 77% of the marriages were intact, dropped to 71% in 1980 and 60% in 2000. For African Americans, the percentage dropped from 70% in 1970 to 50% in 2008.*
- **The percentage of births to married couples dropped to 60%.** *In 1970, 89% of all births were to married couples; in 1980 it dropped to 82%, in 1990 to 72% and 67% in 2000. For African Americans, the percentages dropped from 62% in 1970 to only 28% in 2008.*
- **The percentage of children living with their own married parents also dropped to 61%.** *In 1970, the percentage of children living with their biological parents was 69% and it dropped to 61% in 2000. For African Americans, the percentage dropped to only 29% in 2008.*

Benefits of Marriage

- **Married people live longer than unmarried or divorced people.** *Nonmarried women have 50% higher mortality rates than married women and nonmarried men have a 250% higher rate than married men. (Waite & Gallagher, 2000)*
- **Married individuals are significantly less likely to be problem drinkers than those who are divorced, separated or single.** (Waite & Gallagher, 2000)
- **Married people are happier than single, widowed, or cohabiting people.** *About 40% of married people report being very happy with their lives, whereas only 18% of divorced people, 15% of separated people, and only 22% of widowed and 22% of cohabiting people report being very happy. (Waite & Gallagher, 2000)*
- **Married people have more sex and a better quality sexual relationship than do single, divorced or cohabiting individuals.** (Waite & Gallagher, 2000)
- **Married people are more successful in their careers, earn more, and have more wealth than single, divorced or cohabiting individuals.** (Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Antonovics & Town, 2004)
- **Children from homes where the parents are married tend to be more academically successful, more emotionally stable, and more often assume leadership roles.** (Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Manning & Lamb, 2003)
- **Adolescents living with their biological parents are less likely to have sexual intercourse.** (Pearson, Frisco, 2006; Sieving, Eisenberg, Pettingell, & Skay, 2006)
- **Two-parent households protect children from the negative effects of poverty.** *In the U.S., nearly 60% of the children from single-parent households live in poverty, as compared to only 11% of children from two-parent families. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006)*
- **Adolescents living with both biological parents exhibit lower levels of problem behavior than peers from any other family type.** (Carlson, 2006)
- **Males whose parents never married are significantly less likely to marry and more likely to cheat on their romantic partners.** (Colman & Widon, 2004)
- **Teens in intact families are less likely to become pregnant compared to peers in other family structures** (Painter & Levine, 2004)

Family Structure is Becoming More Complex

- **Single-parent families rose to an all-time high in 2005 to 37% of families.** (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006)

- **There were 13.7 million single parents in 2007** (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009)
- **The percentage of two-parent families varies by ethnic/cultural group:** 87% of Asian children live in two-parent homes; 75% of Caucasians; 64% of Hispanics; and 35% of African American. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008)
- **In 2009, 70% of all children in the U.S. ages 0-17 lived with two parents and 26% lived with one parent.** Among children who living with two parents, 88% lived with two married parents (biological or adoptive). Among children living with one parent, 79% lived with their single mother (without a cohabitating partner) (America's Children, 2010, 2009)
- **30% of all children in the U.S. will spend at least some time in a stepfamily.** (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006)
- **Contemporary families are more varied than ever before.** *There are stepfamilies, blended families, same-sex parents and couples, child-free couples, grandparents raising grandchildren, surrogate parents, foster care families, extended families living together, and a variety of informal family arrangements.* (Halpern, 2005)

Cohabitation

- **More than 60% of first marriages are now preceded by living together compared to virtually 50 years ago.** (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008)
- **6 million households contain a cohabitating couple** (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007)
- **More than half of all couples cohabit before marriage.** *The number of cohabiting couples has increased 800% since the 1960's, when fewer than 500,000 couples were cohabiting.* (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007)
- **Cohabiting before marriage is related to more frequent arguments during marriage as well as a greater perceived risk of separation and divorce when compared to couples who did not live together prior to marriage.** (Hill & Evans, 2006)
- **Couples who cohabit before remarriage report lower levels of happiness in their marriage than remarried couples who did not cohabit.** (Xu, Hudspeth & Bartkowsk, 2006)
- **Cohabitation as an alternative to marriage is more common among those of lower education and income levels, as well as those who have witnessed mental conflict as children.** (State of Our Unions, 2010)
- **About 40% of children will spend some time in a cohabitating household.** *These children tend to have more negative life outcomes.* (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010).
- **Cohabiting couples who are engaged to be married have healthier relationships (51% Vitalized) than cohabiting couples who are not engaged (21% Vitalized).** (Larson & Olson, 2010)

Preparation for Marriage

- **Premarital preparation can reduce divorce rate by 30%.** (Stanley, Amato, Johnson & Markman, 2006)
- **A recent meta-analysis of 11 experimental studies found significant differences favoring couples who received premarital education.** *The overall effect size was very large (.80), representing a 79% improvement in all marital outcomes compared to couples who did not receive premarital education.* (Carroll & Doherty, 2003)
- **Couples who participate in a premarital program (PREPARE) significantly increased their couple satisfaction.** *In an outcome study, couples improved in 10 out of 13 relationship categories.* (Knutson & Olson, 2003)

- **Premarital counseling increases the likelihood a couple will seek out and use future marital and family services at the first signs of mental distress compared to couples who had not had premarital counseling.** (Knutson & Olson, 2003).

Strong Marriages and Families

- **A large national sample (n=21,501) of married couples who completed a couple inventory (ENRICH) found the top five categories most predictive of marital happiness were: Communication, Flexibility, Couple Closeness, Personality Compatibility and Conflict Skills** (Olson & Olson, 2000)
- **Researchers have identified key characteristics of healthy families that are usually missing from problem families.** They include: *Connectedness, Flexibility, Social and economic resources, Clarity, Open emotional expression, Positive outlook and Spirituality.* (Walsh, 1998)
- **Teens that frequently eat dinner with their families are less likely to smoke, drink, use drugs, run away, get into fights, or engage in other problem behaviors.** (Sen, 2010)
- **Closeness with either a biological or step-father is associated with a decrease in the likelihood that an adolescent boy will expect someday to divorce.** (Risch, Jodi & Eccles, 2004)
- **Religious attendance is positively correlated with higher G.P.A.'s for teens.** (Fagen, 2006)
- **Couples who agree on spiritual beliefs report significantly higher marital satisfaction and couple closeness than couples who are low on spiritual agreement.** (Larson & Olson, 2004).
- **Drug use in children is lowest in intact married families.** (Daly & Wilson, 1987)
- **Children who grow up in married families with high conflict often experience more or as many problems as children of divorced or never-married parents.** (Amato, 2000)

References:

- Amato, P.R. (2001). Children and divorce in the 1990's: An update of Amato and Keith (1991) metaanalysis. *Journal of Family Psychology, 15*, 355-370.
- Amato, P.R. (2000). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62*(4), 1269-1287.
- Amato, P. (2007). Divorce and the well-being of adults and children. *Family Focus, 52*, F3-F4, F18.
- Antonovics, K. & Town, R. (2004). Are all the good men married? Uncovering the sources of the marital wage premium. *American Economic Review, 94*, 317-321.
- Carlson, M.J. (2006). Family structure, father involvement and adolescent behavioral outcomes. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 68* (1), 137-154.
- Carroll, J.S. & Doherty, W.J. (2003). Evaluating the effectiveness of premarital prevention programs: A meta-analytic review of outcome research. *Family Relations, 52*, 105-118.
- Colman, R.A., & Widon, C.S. (2004). Childhood abuse and adult intimate relationships: A prospective study. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 28* (11), 1133-1151.
- Fagen, P. (2006). A portrait of family and religion in America: Key outcomes for the common good. Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation.
- Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2009 & 2010). America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. (<http://www.childstats.gov>)

- Glenn, N. D. (1996). Values, attitudes, and the state of marriage. In D. Popenoe, J.B. Elshtain & D. Blankenhorn (Eds.), *Promises to keep* (pp. 15-33). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Halpern, D.F. (2005). Psychology at the intersection of work and family. *American Psychologist*, 60, 397-409.
- Hill, J. & Evans, S.G. (2006). Effects of cohabitation length on personal and relational well-being. *Alabama Policy Institute, Vol. API Study*, 1-13.
- Kennedy, S. & Bumpass, C. (2005). Cohabitation and children's living arrangements: New estimates from the United States. *Demographic Research*, 19, 1663-1692.
- Larson, P.J. & Olson, D.H. (2004). Spiritual beliefs and marriage: A national survey based on ENRICH. *The Family Psychologist*, 20 (2), 4-8.
- Larson, P.J. & Olson, D.H. (2010) Cohabitation and Relationship Quality in Dating and Engaged Couples. Brief Research Reports, www.prepare-enrich.com. Minneapolis, MN: Life Innovations
- Manning, W.D. & Lamb, K.A. (2003). Adolescent well-being in cohabiting, married, and single-parent families. *Journal of marriage and family*, 65 (4), 876-893.
- Olson, D.H., & Olson, A.K. (2000). *Empowering couples: Building on your strengths*. Minneapolis, MN: Life Innovations.
- Olson, D.H., DeFrain, J., & Skogrand, L. (2011). *Marriages and Families: Intimacy, Diversity, and Strengths*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Painter, G. & Levine, D.I. (2004). Daddies, devotion, and dollars: How do they matter for youth? *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 63(4), 813-893.
- Pearson, J., Muller, C. & Frisco, M.L. (2006). Parental involvement, family structure, and adolescent decision-making. *Sociological Perspectives*, 49 (1), 67-90.
- Popenoe D. & Whitehead R.D. (2010). *The state of our unions 2010*. Piscataway, NJ: National MarriageProject, Rutgers University.
- Rank, M.R. & Hirschl, T.A. (1999). The economic risk of childhood in America: Estimating the probability of poverty across the formative years. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 1058-1067.
- Risch, S.C., Jodi, K.M. & Eccles, J.S. (2004). Role of the father-adolescent relationship in shaping adolescents' attitudes. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 66 (1), 46-58.
- Schramm, D. (2006). Individual and social costs of divorce in Utah. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 27, 133-151.
- Sen, B. (2010). The relationship between frequency of family dinner and adolescent problem behaviors after adjusting for other family characteristics. *Journal of Adolescence*, 33(1), 187-196.
- Sieving, R.E., Eisenberg, M.E., Pettingell, S., Skay, C. (2006). Friends' influence on adolescents' first sexual intercourse. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, Vol. 38, 1, pp. 13-19.
- Stanley, S.M., Amato, P.R., Johnson, C.A., & Markman, H.J. (2006). Premarital education, marital quality, and marital stability: Findings from a large, random household survey. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20, 1, 117-126.
- The importance of family dinners II (2005). *The National Center of Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University*.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2007). *Statistical abstract of the United States* (122nd ed). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. (<http://www.census.gov>)

U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2010). *Statistical abstract of the United States* (130th ed). Washington, DC:U.S. Government Printing Office. (<http://www.census.gov>).

Waite, L.J., & Gallagher, M. (2000). *The case for marriage: Why married people are happier, healthier, and better off financially*. New York: Doubleday.

Xu, X., Hudspeth, C.D. & Bartkowsk, J.P. (2006). The role of cohabitation in remarriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68 (2), 261-274.

Walsh, F. (1998). *Strengthening family resilience*. New York: Guilford Press.