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Kids

Teach, Empower and Enjoy Your Children.

Why Marriage Matters

Marriage Fun Facts

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.

* Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, "The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier and Better off Financially," (New York: Doubleday, October 2000): 67.

** Claire Kamp Dush and Paul Amato, "Consequences of Relationship Status and Quality for Subjective Well-Being," Journal of Social and Personal Relationships 22(5) (2005): 607-627.



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Fast Facts About Marriage

Additional Fast Facts –

Marriage provides:

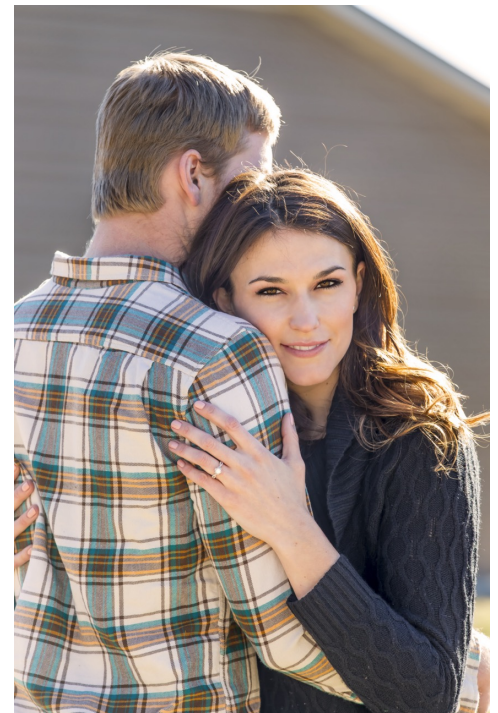
- 1) **Social support** that improves physical health and survival. As a marriage improves over time, so does the reported health of the husband and wife. Spouses encourage healthy behavior that in turn affects emotional and physical well-being: regular sleep, a healthy diet, moderate drinking, monitoring 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 income 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.

Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*, (New York: Double Day, October 2000), 33, 56, 68.

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. "Are We Happy Yet?: A Social Trends Report," Pew Research Center, (2006, 13 February).

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.

Linda Waite, Don Browning, William Doherty, Maggie Gallagher, Ye Luo and Scott Stanley, "Does Divorce Make People Happy? Findings from a Study of Unhappy Marriages," New York: Institute for American Values, (2002): 148-149.



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Additional Fast Facts (continued) –

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.”

Claire Kamp Dush and Paul Amato, “Consequences of Relationship Status and Quality for Subjective

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.

Arne Mastekaasa, “Marital Status, Distress, and Well-Being: An International Comparison,” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 25 (1994): 189-204.

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.

Nadine Marks and James Lambert, “Marital Status Continuity and Change Among Young and Midlife Adults: Longitudinal Effects on Psychological Well-Being,” *Journal of Family Issues* 19 (1998): 652-86.



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.

Harsha Mookherjee, “Marital Status, Gender, and Perception of Well-Being,” *The Journal of Social Psychology* 137 (1997): 95-105.

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Additional Fast Facts (continued) –

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.

Jay Zagorsky, "Marriage and Divorce's Impact on Wealth," Journal of Sociology 41(4) (2005): 406-424. Cited in: Want to be Wealthy? Try Marriage, Cable News Network, (2006, 18 January).



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..."

Thomas Hirschl, Joyce Altobelli and Mark Rank, "Does Marriage Increase the Odds of Affluence? Exploring the Life Course Probabilities," Journal of Marriage and Family 65 (2003): 927-938.

"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.

Thomas Stanley and William Danko, "The Millionaire Next Door: The Surprising Secrets of American's Wealthy," Longstreet Press, Inc., Marietta, Georgia (1996)."

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.

Janet Wilmoth and Gregor Koso, "Does Marital History Matter? Marital Status and Wealth Outcomes Among Preretirement Adults," Journal of Marriage and Family 64 (2002): 254-268.

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Additional Fast Facts (continued) –

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.”

Elizabeth Gorman, “Bringing Home the Bacon: Marital Allocation of Income- Earning Responsibility, Job-Shifts and Men’s Wages,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999, February): 110-122.



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.

Robert Lerman, “How Do Marriage, Cohabitation and Single Parenthood Affect the Material Hardships of Families With Children?,” U. S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation under HHS Grant Number 00ASPE359A, (2002, July). Robert Lerman, “Married and Unmarried Parenthood and Economic Well-Being: A Dynamic Analysis of a Recent Cohort,” U. S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation under HHS Grant Number 00ASPE359A, (2002, July).

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

Robert Lerman, “Marriage and the Economic Well-Being of Families with Children: A Review of the Literature,” U. S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation under HHS Grant Number 00ASPE359A, (2002).

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.”

Janet Wilmoth and Gregor Koso, “Does Marital History Matter? Marital Status and Wealth Outcomes Among Preretirement Adults,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64 (2002): 254-268.

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Additional Fast Facts (continued) –

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.

Martha Ozawa and Yongwoo Lee, "The Net Worth of Female-Headed Households: A Comparison

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.

Testimony Of Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, Co-Director, National Marriage Project Rutgers, The State University Of New Jersey, Before The Committee On Health, Education, Labor And Pensions Subcommittee On Children And Families U.S. Senate, (2004, 28 April).

"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.

Maggie Gallaher, "Why Supporting Marriage Makes Business Sense," Corporate Resource Council, (2002).

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).

Jeffery Gray, "The Fall in Men's Return to Marriage," Journal of Human Resources 32 (1997): 481-503 Table 1.



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<https://www.unitedfamilies.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/09/Marriage-Guide.pdf>