

## MARRIAGE AND FAMILY FACT SHEET

### *Benefits of Marriage*

- Marriage helps promote and support responsible and caring fatherhood.  
Blankenhorn, 1995
- Strong, stable marriages are the "seedbed of moral character and civic virtue," and help build stronger, more stable and less violent communities. Council on Civil Society, 1998
- Marriage is good for taxpayers. The rise in single-parent households is a major cause of child and family poverty and welfare dependency and many associated problems. Lerman, 1990 and Sawhill, 1992
- Marriage increases material well-being—income, assets, and wealth.  
Lillard, L.A., & Waite, Linda J. (1995) "Till Death Do Us Part: Marital Disruption and Mortality." *American Journal of Sociology*, 100:1131-56
- Married men and women generally live longer than single men and women.  
Lillard, L.A., & Waite, Linda J. (1995) "Till Death Do Us Part: Marital Disruption and Mortality." *American Journal of Sociology*, 100:1131-56
- Married people lead more active sex lives than the single, and married people also express higher levels of satisfaction with their sex lives than single or cohabiting people.  
National Health and Social Life Survey

### *Health*

- Married people, even impoverished married people, typically live longer than divorced or never-married peers.  
Paul D. Sorlie, Eric Backlund, and Jacob B. Keller, "US Mortality by Economic, Demographic, and Social Characteristics: The National Longitudinal Mortality Study," *American Journal of Public Health* 85 [1995]: 949-956.
- Married men and women enjoy better health and emotional well-being than unmarried men and women.  
Susan Kennedy, et al., "Immunological Consequences of Acute and Chronic Stressors: Mediating Role of Interpersonal Relationships," *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 61 [1988]:77-85
- Divorced men who smoke have a 71% greater risk of early death than married men who smoke.  
National Institute for Healthcare Research, 1995
- Divorced people are more likely to have alcohol problems than married people, and are less likely to recover. National Institute for Healthcare Research, 1995

### *Employment*

- Married men perform better and earn more on the job than do unmarried men. "Married men earn substantially more per hour than men who are not currently married," a pattern that persists even when education, race, region, age, work experience, and occupation are taken into account. "Married workers are more likely [than unmarried workers] to win high performance ratings, and higher performance ratings are strongly positively related to the probability of promotion." Data indicate that "marriage increases by almost 50 percent the probability of recent hires receiving one of the top two performance ratings," even if allowance is made for education, location, and prior experience. Sanders D. Korenman and David Neumark, "Does Marriage Really Make Men More Productive," No. 29 in the Finance and Economics Discussion Series, Division of Research and Statistics, Federal Reserve Board, Washington, D.C., [May 1988]
- Married individuals work harder, earn more and save more.  
Waite, L.J. (1995) "Does Marriage Matter?"

## *Cohabitation*

- "Marriages that are preceded by living together have a 50 percent higher disruptions (divorce or separation) rates than marriages without premarital cohabitation." Larry Bumpass, *National Survey of Families and Households* 1988-89
- Cohabitation does not prepare couples for marital success. In a Canadian study of more than 3,800 never-married women, sociologists found that women who cohabit before their first marriage are much more likely to fail in marriage than are women who do not cohabit. T. R. Balakrishnan, *et al.*, "A Hazard Model Analysis of Marriage Dissolution in Canada," *Demography* 24, [August 1987], pp. 389-400
- Children of parents who divorce are much more likely to cohabit before marriage than children of parents whose marriages endure.  
Ariand Thornton, "Influence of Marital History of Parents on the Marital and Cohabital Experiences of Children," *American Journal of Sociology* 96 [1991]: 868-894
- Young adults who cohabit outside of marriage are not only more skeptical of wedlock than peers who marry, but they are also more accepting of divorce. Furthermore, the experience of cohabiting typically makes young men and women even more accepting of divorce. William O. Axinn and Ariand Thornton, "The Relationship Between Cohabitation and Divorce: Selectivity or Causal Influence?" *Demography* 29 1992: 357-374
- The cohabitation rate has soared seven-fold since 1970. Arlene Saluter, "Marital Status and Living Arrangements," March 1995

## *Effects of Divorce on Children*

- The poverty rate for a child in a single parent home is six times above that of a married, two-parent home. Typically, the household income of a divorced family falls 37%.
- Recent surveys have found that children from broken homes, when they become teenagers, have two to three times more behavioral and psychological problems than do children from intact homes. Zill and Schoenborn, 1988
- A decade after their parent's divorce, children still carry deep emotional scars from the event. Judith S. Wallerstein, "Children of Divorce: Report of a Ten-Year Follow-Up of Early Latency-Age Children," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 57, No.2 [April 1987], pp 199-211
- Children living with both biological parents are significantly less likely to suffer health problems than children raised in a single parent home. Dawson. 1991
- In 90% of the divorces, the father is gone from the children's lives in five years.
- Nearly two-fifths of all kids live in homes without their father. Of those children more than half have never been in their father's home, and 40 percent have not seen them in at least a year. David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America* 1995
- Daughters, white or black, between the ages of 12 and 16 who lived with unmarried mothers are at least twice as likely to become single parents themselves. McLahan 1988
- Family instability or disruption is one of the major causes of youth suicide, now the second leading cause of death among adolescents. Nelson, Furbelow and Litman, 1988
- Children feel intensely rejected when their parents divorce: "He left Mom. He doesn't care about me."  
Judith Wallerstein, *Second Chances: Men, Women and Children a Decade After Divorce* 1989

## Crime

- Seventy percent of the juveniles in state reform institutions grew up in single or no-parent situations. Beck, Allen *Survey of Youth in Custody*, 1987
- A 10% increase in the percentage of children living in single parent homes leads typically to a 17% increase in juvenile crime. Social Breakdown in America
- Even in high-crime, inner-city neighborhoods, well over 90% of the children from safe stable homes do not become delinquents. In contrast, only 10% of children from unsafe, unstable homes in these neighborhoods avoid crime. Development and Psychopathology 1993
- Studies that controlled for family structure found that divorce--regardless of how rich or poor the disrupted families--had the strongest correlation with robbery rates in American cities with population exceeding 100,000. Sampson, 1987
- When looking at the family structure of inmates in state correctional facilities, half had grown up without the benefit of a two-parent family. Chapman 1986
- Typically from broken homes themselves, most inmates in state prisons have never married. Over half (55 percent) of prisoners in state correctional facilities have never married, and less than one-fifth (18 percent) are currently married. Allen Beck et al., *Survey of State Prison Inmates, 1991* The Bureau of Justice Statistics, March 1993, pp. 3,9,32

## Divorce

- Half of all new marriages are failing. Larry Bumpass, University of Wisconsin
- America's divorce rate is double that of many European countries and three times that of Japan. UN Demographic Yearbook 1995
- The marriage rate has fallen 41 percent since 1960, from 148 marriages per 1,000 women to 87 per 1,000 in 1990. Pamela Webster, "Effects of Childhood Family Background on Adult Marital Quality and Perceived Stability," *American Journal of Sociology* 1995.
- When a marriage fails, the divided partners are frequently burdened with an unhappiness that persists over time. In contrast, a marriage that ends naturally, while it does bring short-term grief to the surviving spouse, does not impose the long-term unhappiness associated with divorce. Anne Mastekaasa "The Subjective Well-Being of the Previously Married: The Importance of Unmarried Cohabitation and Time Since Widowhood or Divorce," *Social Forces* 73 [1994]: 665-692
- Divorce damages parent-child relationships even when it occurs *after* the children have grown up and left the home. Not only did frequency of contact between adult children and their divorced parents decline, so too did "relationship quality." William S. Aquilino, "Later-Life Parental Divorce and Widowhood: Impact on Young Adult's Assessment of Parent-Child Relations," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56 [1994]: 908-922
- Most men and women who divorce will remarry, but second marriages fail at a higher rate than do first marriages. Analysis of the attitudes of over 2,000 adults revealed that "over time, remarried persons are more likely to experience a decline in marital quality than are people in first marriages." Alan Booth, "Starting Over: Why Remarriages Are More Unstable," *Journal of Family Issues* 13 [1992]: 179-194
- Most young people feel that couples should not marry unless they intend to remain together for life. "Among whites, about 84 percent agree that a couple should not marry unless they plan to remain together all their lives." Among blacks, 66 percent of young adults agreed that only those who intend lifetime commitment should marry. Kristen A. Moore and Thomas M. Stief, "Changes in Marriage and Fertility Behavior: Behavior versus Attitudes of Young Adults," Child Trends, Inc., unpublished study. July 1989

- In two-thirds of the former couples, one partner is unhappy, lonely, anxious, depressed and financially precarious ten years after the divorce. In 25 percent of the couples, both former partners are worse off, suffering from loneliness and depression. In only 10 percent of the cases do both former partners reconstruct happier, fuller lives after a decade. Judith Wallerstein, *Second Chances* 1989

### *Characteristics Reported For Strong Marriages*

- What makes a marriage endure? In a recent study at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, researchers Linda C. Robinson and Priscilla W. Blanton sought to identify the distinctive characteristics of marriages which had lasted at least 30 years. Their findings underscore the importance of commitment and religious faith in marital success. For them, "divorce was not an option." These couples often spoke of "the spiritual support and comfort they received from their faith during periods of difficulty."

Linda C. Robinson and Priscilla W. Blanton, "Marital Strengths in Enduring Marriages," *Family Relations* 42 [1993]: 38-45

- Thirteen leading researchers compared findings on the attributes of strong families. In strong families, each family member is "committed to the family as a unit. . . . When outside pressures (work, for example) threaten to remove family from its top priority, members of strong families take action and make sacrifices if necessary to preserve family well-being." Conference participants also identified "a religious or spiritual orientation" as a prime characteristic of strong families. "All studies," noted one researcher, "have found some aspect of religiosity or spirituality as a component of strong families." Researchers also generally agree that "clear role definition guides members of strong families so that each knows his or her duties in the face of crises and problems."

Maria Krysan, Kristin A. Moore, and Nicholas Zill, "Research on Families," a report on a conference sponsored by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 10 May 1990

- "One of the strongest predictors of divorce is the inability to solve problems. Contrary to popular belief, neither dissatisfaction reported in a marriage nor frequency of disagreements spawn failed marriages. Instead, styles of communications that inhibit problem solving spell trouble." Peterson, Gayle. *Communication and Problem Solving*. 1996
- Studies have found that greater father involvement in child care reduces the likelihood of divorce. Seccombe and Lee, 1987
- "Wives happiness is affected indirectly by the division of household labor through the degree to which she perceives her husband as providing her with emotional and instrumental health. Pia & Bengston, 1993

### *Premarital Counseling*

- PREPARE, a premarital inventory, can predict with 80 percent accuracy which couples will divorce. A tenth of those who take it break their engagements, effectively preventing a bad marriage. Mike McManus, *Marriage Savers*
- Some 30 studies show that 80 to 90 percent of Marriage Encounter attendees fall back in love and permanently improve the quality of their marriage. Mike McManus, *Marriage Savers*
- Mentor couples in marriage preparation met with 135 couples from 1992 to 1996. About 25 broke off their relationship or their engagement – one fifth of the total. Thus, those in weak relationships discovered it in advance. And of the 110 who did marry, only three who married who are separated in five years. Mike McManus, *Marriage Savers*
- Of 600 Michigan couples who attended Retrouvaille, a third had already filed divorce papers, yet 80 percent rebuilt their marriages. Two-fifths of 817 in Fort Worth had already separated or divorced, yet 70 percent are still together. Mike McManus, *Marriage Savers*
- Marriage Ministry in Jacksonville had a 95 percent success rate. Mike McManus, *Marriage Savers*