

PREPARE ENRICH

• *building strong marriages* •

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)
- **Marriage among those with college degrees appear to be getting stronger, while marriage among those with a high school degree or less is 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)
- **A small number of studies have found positive individual benefits of divorce such as greater autonomy, personal growth, and happiness.** (Amato, 2001)

The Marriage Index: (By Institute of American Values, 2009).

The Marriage Index was created to illustrate the state of marriage and it is based on five indicators (see below). All indicators have shown a steady decline since 1970. The Marriage Index in 2008 is 60% from a high of 76% in 1970. The five indicators and their decline is 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 person 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)

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