

## Family Structure Impacts Poverty

**Issue:** Poverty and income disparity are closely linked to the presence or absence of marriage.

### Marriage

- A child's likelihood of living in poverty is reduced by 82 percent if he is raised in a married two-parent family with a mother and father.<sup>1</sup>
- Intact married families have the largest annual income of all family structures with children under 18.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2012 6.3 percent of married families were living in poverty, compared to 16.4 percent of male householders and 30.9 percent of female householders.<sup>3</sup>

### Divorce

- Almost 50 percent of American families experience poverty following a divorce.<sup>4</sup>
- Divorcing or separating mothers are 2.83 times more likely to be in poverty than those who remain married.<sup>5</sup>
- Single women's median income dropped by 45 percent following their divorce.<sup>6</sup>

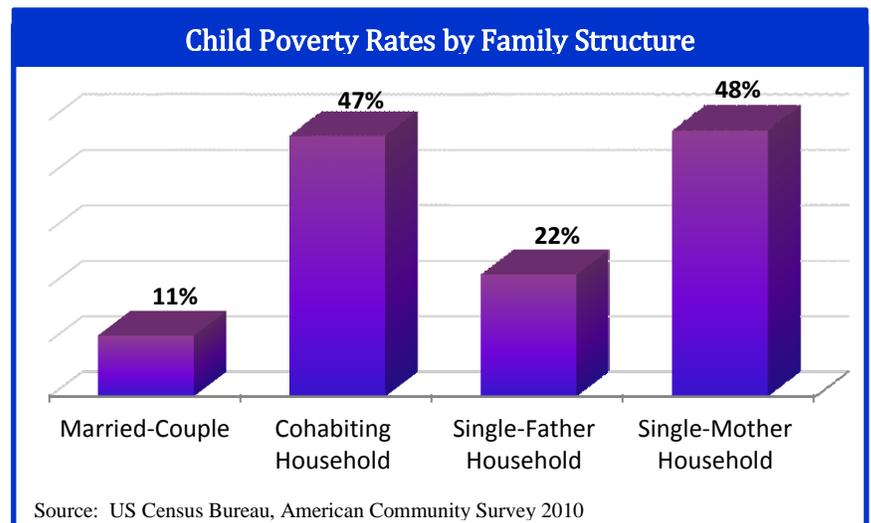
### Single Parent Household

- About 71 percent of impoverished families with children are headed by single parents.<sup>7</sup>
- Children living with a single mother are over four times more likely to live in poverty than are children whose parents are married.<sup>8</sup>

### Out-of-Wedlock Births

- Children born out-of-wedlock spend more time in poverty than do the children of any other family structure.<sup>9</sup>
- Over 75 percent of mothers who give birth out-of-wedlock will be on welfare within five years.<sup>10</sup>

**Conclusion:** Promoting the intact, married family is an essential component to reducing poverty in America. MARRI research available online<sup>11</sup> shows the significant relationship between family structure and poverty.



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<sup>1</sup> “Married two-parent families,” “married-couple families,” and similar terms within this document all refer to families in which there is a married mother and father present. Note, according to the US Census Bureau, “Family households and married-couple families do not include same-sex married couples even if the marriage was performed in a state issuing marriage certificates for same-sex couples.”

Robert E. Rector, “Marriage: America’s Greatest Weapon Against Child Poverty,” *Special Report No. 117, The Heritage Foundation*: Washington, D.C. (5 September 2012). Accessed 30 July 2014.

According to the ACS, a married-couple family consists of “A family in which the householder and his or her spouse are listed as members of the same household.”

<sup>2</sup> Survey of Consumer Finance, 2007. As cited in Patrick F. Fagan, Andrew J. Kidd, and Henry Potrykus, “Marriage and Economic Well-Being: The Economy of the Family Rises or Falls with Marriage,” (May 2011). Available at <http://marri.frc.org/get.cfm?i=RS11E03>. Accessed 20 July 2011.

<sup>3</sup> United States. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau. “Table 4: Families in Poverty by Type of Family: 2011 and 2012.” *Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement*. Washington: US Census Bureau, 2012. Web. 30 Jul. 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Julia Heath, “Determinants of Spells of Poverty Following Divorce,” *Review of Social Economy*, Vol. 49 (1992), pp. 305-315.

<sup>5</sup> Teresa A. Mauldin and Yoko Mimura, “Marrying, Unmarrying, and Poverty Dynamics among Mothers with Children Living at Home,” *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 28, no. 4 (December 2007): 576.

<sup>6</sup> Patrick F. Fagan, Andrew J. Kidd, and Henry Potrykus, “Marriage and Economic Well-Being: The Economy of the Family Rises or Falls with Marriage,” (May 2011). Available at <http://marri.frc.org/get.cfm?i=RS11E03>. Accessed 31 July 2014.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2007-2009*

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2007-2009*

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. “Social and Economic Characteristics of Currently Unmarried Women With a Recent Birth: 2011”, Issued May 2011. (American Community Survey Report, 2011). Available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acs-21.pdf>. Accessed 1 August 2014.

<sup>10</sup> J. Jacobson and R. Maynard, “Unwed Mothers and Long-Term Dependency,” Paper presented at American Enterprise Institute Conference on Welfare Reform, September 1995.

*Why It Matters: Teen Pregnancy, Poverty, and Income Disparity*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2010. Available at <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/library/2010/why-it-matters-teen-pregnancy-poverty-and-income-disparity>. Accessed 1 August 2014.

<sup>11</sup> [www.marri.us](http://www.marri.us) For example, “Our Fiscal Crisis: We Cannot Tax, Spend, And Borrow Enough To Substitute For Marriage”, “U.S. Social Policy Dependence on the Family Derived from the Index of Belonging”, and “Non-Marriage Reduces U.S. Labor Participation: The Abandonment of Marriage Puts America at Risk of a Depression”