



Marriage Benefits Society

Issue: The family is the building block of society, and marriage is its foundation. Marriage between a man and woman¹ improves each of the five major institutions of society: school, church, family, government, and market.

School

- Individuals from intact families completed, on average, more years of schooling and were more likely to graduate from high school and college than were their peers raised in non-intact families.²
- High school students in intact families have GPAs 11 percent higher than those from divorced families.³

Church

- Direct marriage (rather than cohabitation prior to marriage) has a positive effect on religious participation in young adults.⁴
- Religious practice leads to a reduced incidence of domestic abuse, crime, substance abuse and addiction, and an increase in health, longevity, and education attainment.⁵

Family

- Families with both biological or adoptive parents present have the highest quality of parent-child relationships.⁶
- Married men and women report having more enjoyable sexual intercourse more often.⁷

Market

- Married couples file less than half of all income-tax returns, but pay nearly three-quarters of all income taxes.⁸
- 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.⁹

Government

- Married men are less likely to commit crimes¹⁰ and acts of domestic violence.¹¹ Adolescents from intact families commit fewer violent acts of delinquency.¹²
- Parental divorce contributes to "externalizing behaviors," including weapon carrying, fighting, substance abuse, and binge drinking.¹³
- Married people are least likely to have mental disorders,¹⁴ and have higher levels of emotional and psychological well-being than those who are single, divorced, or cohabiting.¹⁵

Conclusion: The intact, married family naturally delivers fundamental benefits to society. MARRI research available online¹⁶ shows the many ways that marriage contributes to societal well-being.

¹ “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.”

² Ginther, Donna K., “Family Structure and Children’s Educational Outcomes: Blended Families, Stylized Facts, and Descriptive Regressions.” *Demography* Vol. 41(4) (2004) pp. 671-696. As cited in Patrick F. Fagan and Scott Talkington, “Ever Received a Bachelor’s Degree by Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family Origin,” *Mapping America: Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good* No. 105 available at <http://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF11G27.pdf>

³ Barry D. Ham, “The Effects of Divorce on the Academic Achievement of High School Seniors,” *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 38, no. 3 (2003): 176.

⁴ Arland Thornton, William G. Axinn, and Daniel H. Hill, “Reciprocal Effects of Religiosity, Cohabitation, and Marriage,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 3 (1992): 643. As cited in Patrick F. Fagan, Anne Dougherty, and Miriam McElvain, “164 Reasons to Marry,” at <http://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF12A85.pdf>

⁵ Patrick F. Fagan, “Why Religion Matters Even More: The Impact of Religious Practice on Social Stability,” (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2006), at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2006/12/why-religion-matters-even-more-the-impact-of-religious-practice-on-social-stability>

⁶ Nicholas Zill, “Quality of Parent-Child Relationship and Family Structure.” Available at <http://www.frc.org/mappingamerica/mapping-america-47-quality-of-parent-child-relationship-and-family-structure>. Accessed 19 August 2014 as cited in Patrick F. Fagan, Anne Dougherty, and Miriam McElvain, “164 Reasons to Marry,” at <http://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF12A85.pdf>

⁷ Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, “The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better off Financially.” As cited by Richard Niolon. Available at http://successfulesingles.com/media_articles_files/The%20Case%20for%20Marriage:%20Why%20Married%20People%20Are%20Happier,%20Healthier,%20and%20Better%20off%20Financially.pdf

⁸ Scott A. Hodge, “Married Couples File Less Than Half of All Tax Returns, But Pay 74 percent of All Income Taxes,” *Tax Foundation Fiscal Fact* No. 4, March 25, 2003.

⁹ 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.” Note, “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.”

¹⁰ Ryan D. King, Michael Massoglia, and Ross McMillan, “The Context of Marriage and Crime: Gender, the Propensity to Marry, and Offending in Early Adulthood,” *Criminology*, 445 (2007): 33-65. As cited by The Heritage Foundation: Family Facts. Available at <http://www.familyfacts.org/briefs/26/marriage-and-family-as-deterrents-from-delinquency-violence-and-crime>. Accessed 22 September 2011.

Robert J. Sampson and John H. Laub, “Crime and deviance over the life course: The salience of adult social bonds,” *American Sociology Review* 55 (1990): 609-627.

¹¹ Catherine T. Kenney and Sara S. McLanahan, “Why Are Cohabiting Relationships More Violent than Marriages?” *Demography* 43 (2006): 133.

Jan Stets, “Cohabiting and Marital Aggression: The Role of Social Isolation,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53, no. 3 (1991): 674 Galena Kline, et al., “Timing Is Everything: Pre-Engagement Cohabitation and Increased Risk for Poor Marital Outcomes,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 18, no. 2 (2004): 315.

¹² Stephen Demuth and Susan L. Brown, “Family Structure, Family Processes, and Adolescent Delinquency: The Significance of Parental Absence Versus Parental Gender,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 41, no. 1 (February 2004): 58-81. As cited on The Heritage Foundation: Family Facts. Available at <http://www.familyfacts.org/briefs/26/marriage-and-family-as-deterrents-from-delinquency-violence-and-crime>. Accessed 20 July 2011.

¹³ Kathleen Boyce Rodgers and Hilary A. Rose, “Risk and Resiliency Factors among Adolescents Who Experience Marital Transitions,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64 (2002): 1028-1029.

¹⁴ David Williams, et al., “Marital Status and Psychiatric Disorders Among Blacks and Whites,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 33 (1992): 140-157. As cited in Glenn T. Stanton, “Why Marriage Matters.” Available at <http://www.ampartnership.org/resourcecenter/news/89-why-marriage-matters.html>. Accessed 27 July 2011.

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¹⁵ Susan L. Brown, “Relationship Quality Dynamics of Cohabiting Unions,” *Journal of Family Issues* 24, no. 5 (2003): 583-601; Susan L. Brown, “The Effect of Union Type on Psychological Well-being: Depression among Cohabitators versus Marrieds,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 41, no. 3 (2000): 241-255; J.K. Kiecolt-Glaser and T.L. Newton, “Marriage and Health: His and Hers,” *Psychological Bulletin* 127, no. 4 (2001): 472-503; Lee A. Lillard and Constantijn W.A. Panis, “Marital Status and Mortality: The Role of Health,” *Demography* 33, no. 3 (1996): 313-327; Lee A. Lillard and Linda J. Waite, “Til Death Do us Part: Marital Disruption and Mortality,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 100, no. 5 (1995): 1131-1156; Kristen Marcussen, “Explaining Differences in Mental Health Between Married and Cohabiting Individuals,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (1999): 239-257; Steven Stack and J. Ross Eshleman, “Marital Status and Happiness: A 17-Nation Study,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60 (1998): 527-536; K.A.S. Wickrama, et al., “Marital Quality and Physical Illness: A Latent Growth Curve Analysis,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 59, no. 1 (1997): 143-155. All as cited in Daniel Lees, “The Psychological Benefits of Marriage,” *Research Note* (April 2007): 1-4. Available at http://www.maxim.org.nz/files/pdf/psychological_benefits_of_marriage.pdf. Accessed 27 July 2011

¹⁶ www.marri.us