



EVIDENCE ON THE BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE

STABILITY

Cohabitees are more likely to separate than married couples

"Children born to cohabiting parents were almost three times as likely as those born to married parents to no longer be living with both these parents when they were 5 years old".¹

Having children outside of marriage increases the risk of marriage breakdown

"76 per cent of mothers who married before giving birth remained intact, compared to 44 per cent of those who married after they had their first child".²

Children of married parents are themselves more likely to get married

"Over the course of a lifetime, British adults were ... 10 percent more likely to have got married ... if their parents were married at the time of their birth".³

HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

Married people are happier

"even when controlling for pre-marital life satisfaction levels, those who marry are more satisfied than those who remain single... the benefits of marriage persist in the long-term".⁴

Married women live healthier lifestyles

"Smoking, recreational drug usage and depressive symptoms were much lower for continuously married women than for all other women".⁵

Married men are healthier

"...after adjustment of potentially confounding variables, the risk of mortality from cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, external causes, and all causes was two- to three-fold higher for never-married than for married men".⁶

There are fewer mental health issues for married couples

"Marriage was associated with reduced risk of the first onset of most mental disorders in both men and women".⁷

Children of married parents have better health

Pre-school age children were almost three times more likely to be significantly overweight (BMI equal to or greater than the 95th percentile) if they grew up in an "unstable cohabiting" home compared to a "stable married" home.⁸

"Compared to children living with married parents, children who lived in other family types, including other stable families, were more likely to display externalising behavioural problems at age 5".⁹

Children aged 5 to 10 years old are nearly three times more likely to have mental health issues living with a lone parent and twice as likely with cohabiting parents, compared to living with married parents.¹⁰

WEALTH

Married couples are richer than cohabiters

"Tracking the earnings of comparable men for a decade from 2009 showed a correlation between income increase and family structure. For men who married during this time their income grew 58.8%, while for cohabiters their income grew by 46.4%."¹¹

Children of married couples are more likely to move out of poverty than children of unmarried parents

"An American study found that there was an 80% chance of moving out of poverty for those born in poverty to married parents, compared to 50% for those born in poverty to unmarried parents."¹²

CRIMINALITY

Unmarried mothers experience more violence

Twice as many unmarried mothers reported that their partner used force in their relationship compared to married mothers.¹³

Adolescent children from fatherless homes are more likely to be incarcerated

Adolescents from fatherless homes are three times more likely to be incarcerated by the age of 30 than those from intact families.¹⁴

EDUCATION

Children of married parents fare better at school

Comparing married, cohabiting and single parent families, children from married homes:

- Get the best grades in school;
- Are least likely to be expelled;
- Are least likely to have other problems at school.¹⁵

Children of married parents are more likely to go to university

"Over the course of a lifetime, British adults were 23 percent more likely to have been to university ... if their parents were married at the time of their birth".¹⁶

1 Holmes, J and Kiernan, K, 'Fragile Families in the UK: evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study – Draft Report', University of York (2010), pages 2 and 22

2 Marriage Foundation, March 2015, <https://marriagefoundation.org.uk/first-comes-love-then-comes-marriage-tying-the-knot-before-first-baby-is-a-key-ingredient-for-marriage-success/> accessed 24 February 2023

3 The long term effect of marriage on social mobility, Marriage Foundation, January 2018, <https://marriagefoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MF-paper-Social-mobility-January-2018.pdf> accessed 6 March 2023

4 Grover, S and Helliwell, J F, 'How's Life at Home? New Evidence on Marriage and the Set Points for Happiness', Journal of Happiness Studies (2019) 20, pages 384-385

5 Family Structure Still Matters, The Centre for Social Justice, August 2020, <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CSJJ8372-Family-structure-Report-200807.pdf> accessed 9 March 2023

6 Ikeda, A, Iso, H, Toyoshima, H et al, 'Marital Status and Mortality Among Japanese Men And Women: The Japan Collaborative Cohort Study', BMC Public Health (2007) 7(73), page 4

7 Scott, K, Wells, J E, Angermeyer M et al, 'Gender and the Relationship Between Marital Status and First onset of Mood, Anxiety and Substance Use Disorder', Psychological Medicine (2010) 40(9)

8 Waldfoegel, J, Craige, T, and Brooks-Gunn, J, 'Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing', The Future of Children (2010) 20(2), pages 102 and 105

9 The Centre for Social Justice, Op cit, page 14

10 Children whose families struggle to get on are more likely to have mental disorders, Office for National Statistics, 26 March 2019, <https://bit.ly/3Faxq9c> accessed 24 February 2023

11 The Centre for Social Justice, Op cit, page 7

12 Ibid, page 9

13 Ibid, page 16

14 Harper, C and McLanahan, S, 'Father's Absence and Youth Incarceration', Journal of Research on Adolescence (2004) 14(3), pages 382-3

15 Manning, W and Lamb, K, 'Adolescent Well-Being in Cohabiting, Married, and Single-Parent Families', Journal of Marriage and Family (2003) 65(4), page 885

16 The long term effect of marriage on social mobility, Marriage Foundation, January 2018, <https://marriagefoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MF-paper-Social-mobility-January-2018.pdf> accessed 6 March 2023