



Why Marriage Matters: Seven Scientific Reasons

Did you know that a large body of social science research now affirms the importance of marriage for children, adults, and communities? Marriage matters because when fathers are committed to their children (and their children's mother), children are most likely to thrive and women are spared the unfair burdens of parenting alone.

1. **Marriage reduces the risk of poverty for children and communities.** The majority of children whose parents don't get or stay married experience at least a year of poverty.
2. **Fatherless households increase crime.** Boys whose parents divorced or never married, for example, are two to three times more likely to end up in jails as adults.
3. **Marriage protects children's physical and mental health.** Children whose parents get and stayed married are healthier and also much less likely to suffer mental illness, including depression and teen suicide.
4. **Both men and women who marry live longer, healthier, and happier lives.** On virtually every measure of health and well-being, married people are better-off than otherwise similar singles, on average.
5. **Just living together is not the same as marriage.** Married couples who cohabit first are thirty to fifty percent more likely to divorce. People who just live together do not get the same boost to health, welfare and happiness, on average, as spouses. Neither do their children. Children whose parents cohabit are at increased risk for domestic violence and child abuse and neglect. Children born to parents who are just living together are also three times more likely to experience their parents' breakup by age 5.
6. **Parents who don't get or stay married put children's education at risk.** Children whose parents divorced or never married have lower grade point averages, are more likely to be held back a grade, and to drop out of school. They are also less likely to end up college graduates.
7. **When marriages fail, ties between parents and children typically weaken too.** Adult children whose parents divorced are only half as likely to have warm, close ties to both their mothers and their fathers. For example, in one large national survey, 65 percent of adult children of divorce reported they were not close to their fathers (compared to 29 percent of adults from intact marriages).

For more information, visit www.MarriageMississippi.com.

Source: Wilcox et al. (2005). *Why marriage matters: 26 conclusions from the social sciences*.



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