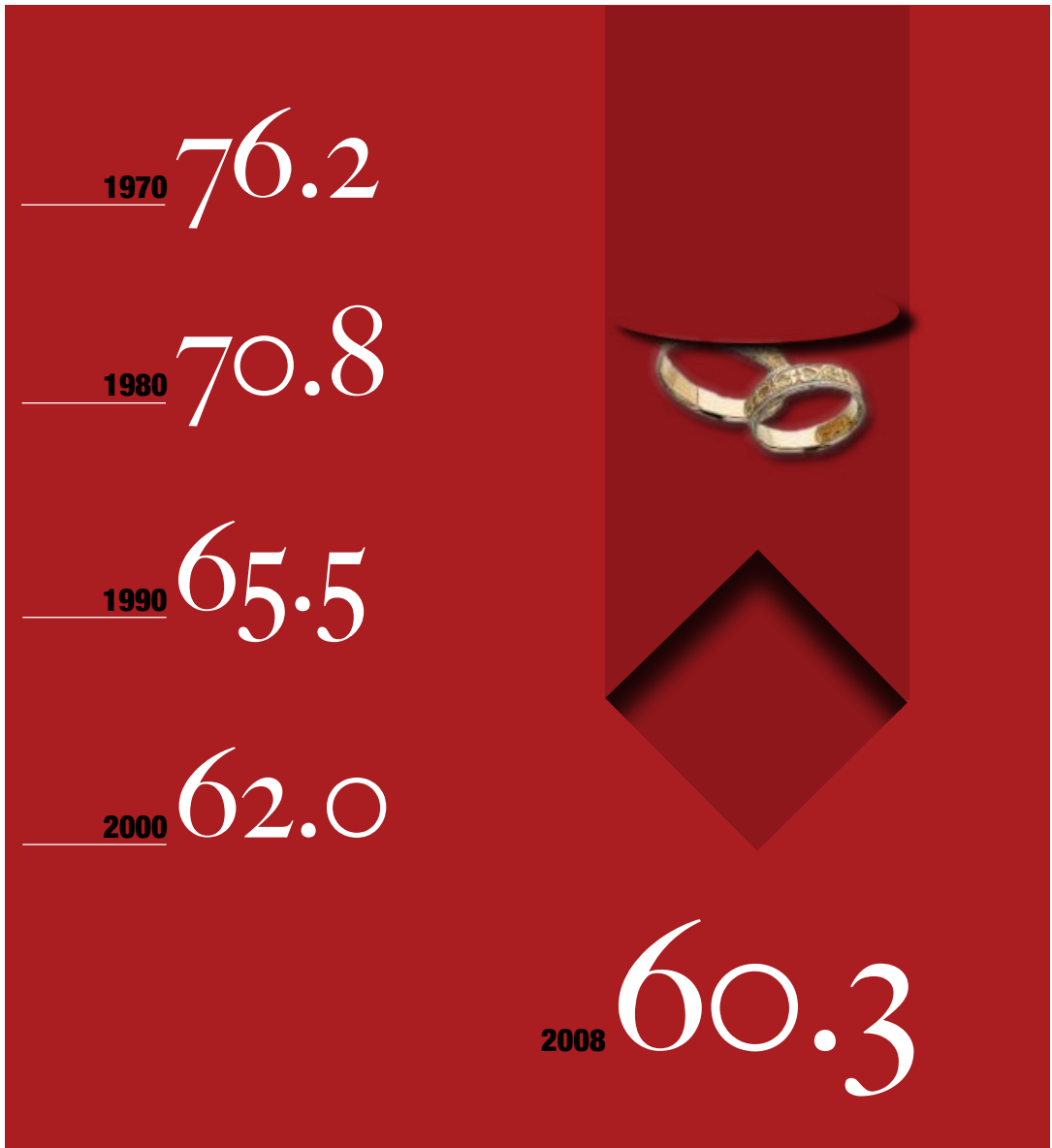


# The Marriage Index

*A Proposal to Establish Leading Marriage Indicators*





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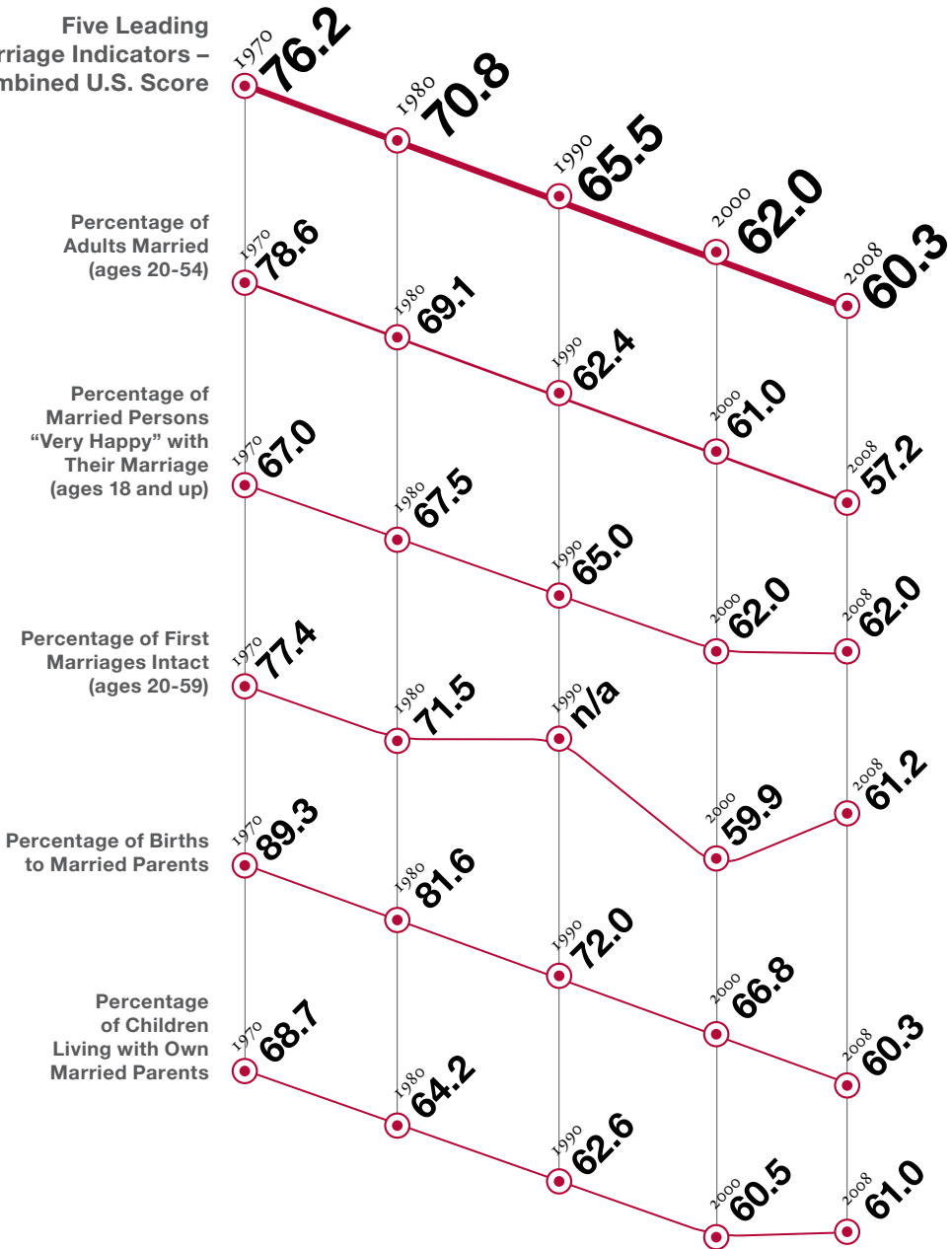
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# THE MARRIAGE INDEX

*Monitoring the Nation's Leading Marriage Indicators*

**Five Leading  
Marriage Indicators –  
Combined U.S. Score**



# WHY WE NEED A MARRIAGE INDEX

What helps us the most to thrive, as individuals and as a society? Money or marriage? Assets or relationships?

Here's what we know: A large body of research suggests that the status of our marriages influences our well-being *at least* as much as the status of our finances.

But consider this puzzle. Why do we so carefully measure and widely publicize our leading *economic* indicators, and do everything we can to improve them, while rarely bothering to measure our leading *marriage* indicators, or try to do anything as a society to improve them?

In recent decades, economists have developed a set of Leading Economic Indicators—fundamental, carefully chosen measurements that reveal the direction and overall health of the U.S. economy. These indicators are generally accepted by elites and by the broad public as both accurate and important. As a result, *they matter*. We read about them in publications and hear about them on TV. Policy makers and opinion shapers pay attention to them. If they are improving, we tend to rejoice. If they are declining, we tend to fret, and ask, “What can we do?”

But what about attending as a society to the health of our marriages? There is *no* equivalent effort to focus on marriage. We do not, as in the case of the economy, have generally accepted leading measurements, or even much of a sense that such measurements (even if we *did* agree on them) would truly matter to our well-being and therefore call for a collective response. As a result, to whatever degree we do have them, they actually *don't* matter much. The absence of a clear, compelling, and commonly-agreed upon set of leading marriage indicators prevents us from focusing clearly on the health of marriage in America. Consequently, policy makers and opinion leaders rarely seem to care about marriage trends, or even notice them.

How odd. This situation should change. And now it *can* change. A bipartisan group of scholars and leaders has carefully developed a set of Leading Marriage Indicators—fundamental, well-chosen measurements that accurately reveal the direction and overall health of marriage as a U.S. social institution.

Why does the U.S. need a Marriage Index?

*Because unless we know where we are, and why that matters, we can't know where to go.*

*Because no social progress is possible without widely shared, trackable goals.*

*Because for any society that cares about its future, leading marriage indicators are as important as leading economic indicators.*

## WHAT ARE AMERICA'S LEADING MARRIAGE INDICATORS?

### 1. *Percentage of Adults Married*

Just as asking how many adults attend church is one measure of a church's institutional strength, knowing the percentage of adults who are married sheds light on the strength of the institution of marriage.

But why count young adults in their early 20's when more of them are postponing marriage today? We chose to include them for two main reasons. First, while marriage rates continue to decline among young adults, one study finds that 59 percent of women under 24 had already cohabited—which was substantially larger than in previous decades. Additionally, more than three-quarters of women under 24 were either married, a single parent, or had cohabited.[1] Clearly, many adults aged 20-24 are entering into co-residential, romantic unions and/or having children. Their preference for non-marital unions over marriage suggests something about the health of marriage—just as a decline in church

attendance among young adults would suggest something about the health of the church.

Second, one recent study finds that adults who married between 22-25 actually reported the happiest marriages. While the authors caution against suggesting that this finding necessarily means that 22-25 is the optimal marrying age for everyone, it does suggest that, contrary to much conventional wisdom, “little or nothing is likely to be gained by deliberately delaying marriage beyond the mid twenties.”[2] Their finding is consistent with previous findings that while teenage marriages are a significant predictor for later divorce, the percentages for young adults 20-24 are much more similar to the 25-29 cohort. In fact, Hispanics who marry between ages 20-24 have more stable marriages than Hispanics who marry when they are 25 or older.[3]

We cap the age range at 54 years old because measuring the percentage of older adults married provides a distorted picture because of changes that have nothing to do with the health of marriage. For example, as the baby boomers age, the percentage of married persons will tend to decrease as the percentage of widows increases. Hypothetically, then, a greater proportion of relatively younger adults might be getting married, but the increase of widowed persons in the large baby boom cohort would hide this development.

How strong is marriage? The trend in the last four decades suggests that many adults are less likely to find marriage an attractive choice. In 1970, 78.6 percent of adults age 20-54 were married. In 2008, it dropped to 57.2 percent.

People still form relationships and still have children, but they are more likely to do so without marriage. In part because of the legacy of divorce, national surveys consistently show that young people today have a much more favorable attitude toward cohabitation than earlier generations.[4] The data also reveals that more adults are cohabiting today than forty years ago. In 1960 in the U.S., there were 439,000 cohabiting couples. In 2007 there were 6.4 million.[5] Because cohabiting couples



are much more likely to break up than married couples, and children who grow up outside an intact marriage are exposed to more social and economic risks than children from married couples,[6] we should ask ourselves this simple question: do we want to treat cohabitation on par with marriage, or is there something unique about marriage that deserves special status in our society?

## 2. *Percentage of Married Persons “Very Happy” with Their Marriage*

Marital quality affects the health of marriage in two main ways. The first is obvious: happily married persons probably have stronger marriages! The second may be more subtle: it affects the link—for good or ill—between adults and children that marriage is supposed to secure. Indeed, the household is only as strong as the foundation: when parents’ marital relationship suffers, children also tend to suffer. On average, children raised by happily married parents fare better on almost every measure of child well-being compared to children raised by unhappily married parents.[7] Thus, as with all the indicators, marital quality showcases how marriage is more than just a private relationship between two consenting adults—it’s a social good that has implications for children’s well-being.

Tracking marital quality also provides other clues about the state of marriage as an institution. As social scientists point out, if we attribute the rise of divorce in the last several decades mainly to the fact that unhappily married couples have fewer barriers to divorce, marital quality for the married population overall should increase.[8] However, while leveling off in the last decade, marital quality actually *declined* moderately in the last several decades, from 67 percent in 1970 to 62 percent in 2000—a statistically significant change.

Why the slight decrease? As University of Texas family sociologist Norval Glenn suggests, the decline in marital happiness is likely due in part to a decline of the ideal of marital permanence [9]—a theory borne out by social science findings. Studies find that women’s normative

support for the institution of marriage is associated with women's marital happiness;[10] that spouses, particularly husbands, are more likely to sacrifice for their spouses if they have a strong commitment to marriage;[11] and that married persons with more favorable attitudes toward divorce actually experience less happy marriages than those who oppose divorce. [12] Clearly, marital quality matters.

### *3. Percentage of First Marriages Intact*

Marriage invites a person to look out for the well-being of another person for life. While divorce is sometimes a sad necessity—in the case of domestic violence, for instance—the evidence reveals that on average divorced persons are at least no happier than married couples,[13] and as we noted earlier, their children can experience considerable hardships. So one way to help gauge the health of marriage is to measure the proportion of U.S. adults who practice a lifelong commitment to marriage.

As with the first indicator, we are measuring first marriages still intact of a certain portion of the population, this time 20-59 year olds. (The U.S. Census Bureau's age breakdowns for this indicator include 50-59 year olds as one group.) Again, we do this because the aging of the baby boomer population increases the proportion of widowed persons, which could exaggerate the proportion of non-intact marriages.

On this indicator, we find that in 1970, 77.4 percent of first marriages were intact, whereas only 61.2 percent were intact in 2007. However, more married couples seem to be staying together at least in the last decade. First marriages intact dropped 17.5 percentage points from 1970-2000, but actually rose slightly in the last decade. So while it's still low, it's far from inevitable that it will only decline further—we *can* renew marriage as a lifelong commitment to one person.

### *4. Percentage of Births to Married Parents*

At first glance, our last two indicators appear to be narrowly focused on children—which begs the question: why devote 2/5 of a Marriage Index

to children? The simple answer is that these last two indicators concern more than *just* children: fundamentally, they reflect the link between adults and children that marriage is designed to create and secure. At its essence, marriage is a social institution that, when it's working, meets social needs—and perhaps the greatest of these needs is supporting the helpless offspring that result from the sexual union of two people. Yes, one of the goods of marriage is an intimate relationship—but we would be shortchanging the essential definition of marriage by *reducing* it to that. So if marriage fundamentally is about creating a link between adults *and* children, any index that purports to measure the health of marriage must capture the strength or weakness of this link. Our last two indicators attempt to accomplish just that.

So when marriage works—and it doesn't always work as it's designed to—it creates a context in which children can flourish. As social science amply shows, while not all marriages provide a good home for children, on average children from married family households fare better than children from other family structures.[14] The trend in the last four decades, however, has been that more children are born outside of marriage. The statistics are striking: in 1970, 89.3 percent of children were born to married parents. Today it's 60.3 percent.

More children today are born to cohabiting or single-parent homes. What are the implications for children's well-being? Because cohabitation and single-parent families tend to be much less stable arrangements than marriage, children born outside of wedlock tend to be in a disadvantaged position. For instance, one study found that 50 percent of children born to a cohabiting couple see their parents' union end by age five, compared to 15 percent for children born to a married couple.[15] Another study found that this kind of partnership instability is positively associated with behavioral problems in children as young as age 3.[16] So while marriage remains one of the greatest gifts our society can give to children, more children today are born deprived of that gift.

### 5. *Percentage of Children Living with Own Married Parents*

Marriage not only ensures that children are born into a stable family—it also intends that children are *raised* with their own biological or adoptive mother and father. That’s what happens when marriage works—it maintains and strengthens the link between parents and children, and creates a context for children to flourish. While we can certainly point to examples of how high-conflict marriages can hurt children, on average marriage does a good job of helping children flourish. As longtime family scholar David Popenoe, summing up the scholarly evidence, put it, “Few propositions have more empirical support in the social sciences than this one: Compared to all other family forms, families headed by married, biological parents are best for children.” [17]

What happens when marriage doesn’t work? Studies find that children of divorce don’t see their fathers as frequently and they report less affectionate relationships with their fathers than do children living with their own married parents.[18] Further, children from one-parent families are more likely to drop out of high school, to be unemployed, and to become teen mothers.[19] Even living in stepfamilies is not as good, on average, for children as living with their own married parents. In fact, on some indicators children in stepfamilies look more like children of single parents than children being raised by their own married parents.[20]

So if we agree that one of the fundamental purposes of marriage is to maintain the link between parents and children, and if we want to know how that’s working, we’ll want to know what children’s living arrangements are. Here again, the trend-line data show a weakening over the last four decades: from 68.7 percent in 1970 to 60.5 percent in 2000, and leveling off at 61.0 percent in 2007. While the percentage of children living with their biological or adoptive mother and father dropped since 1970, it’s not inevitable it will decline further—as the leveling off in the last decade indicates.

# HOW CAN WE IMPROVE AMERICA'S CURRENT SCORE OF 60.3?

*101 Ideas from David Blankenhorn & Linda Malone-Colón\**

1. Make the issue of reuniting fathers and children a top priority through programs of advocacy, family reconciliation, and community mobilization.
2. Create a council in your community that seeks to strengthen marriage and family life.
3. Make raising children who succeed in marriage at least as important a goal as raising children who succeed in careers.
4. If your marriage has recovered from serious trouble, consider volunteering in (or starting!) a marriage mentoring program in your community.
5. Write to your local officials and ask them to create a vision statement for your community about how to strengthen marriage and increase the proportion of children who live with their own married parents.
6. Be intentional about talking to your teenagers about marriage.
7. Encourage young people to see dating within the context of courtship, where courtship is defined as “finding and winning the right person for marriage.”
8. Recognize that older adults, including parents, teachers, college professors and administrators, should have important roles in guiding the courting practices of the young.
9. Parents, in particular, should encourage their adult children to make the commitment of marriage to the loves of their lives—assuming that the partners are mature and responsible.
10. If your children do get married, offer to help support them while they get settled.

11. Public and private organizations could launch a public health campaign to alert the public to the central role that active and affectionate fathers play in protecting their children from neglect and abuse.
12. Create pro-marriage public service announcements, including those with celebrity spokespersons.
13. Determine the value of marriage for different subsets of the population — who benefits most from marriage and how do they benefit?
14. Develop a research-informed definition of marital success and examine the processes of marital success within different subsets of the population.
15. Evaluate the effectiveness of community-wide coalitions and programs, especially by tracking “hard” measures such as divorce rates, tax dollars saved, and decreased absenteeism at work.
16. Develop and evaluate comprehensive youth programs that include character development, relationship and communication skills, partner selection skills, realistic marriage expectations, and common problems and solutions in marriage.
17. Pay special attention to the needs of youth who are at risk because of a “poverty of connections.”
18. Reclaim the ideal of marital permanence and affirm marriage as the preeminent environment for childrearing.
19. Avoid the mistake of equating marriage with concepts such as “committed relationships” which have no institutional embodiment.
20. Community organizers, veterans of the civil rights movement and poor people’s movement, and others could create a broad new populist movement to empower marriage and families in their communities.
21. Strive to develop neighborhoods which are stable and supportive of family life. The ecology of safe, child-supportive, and marriage-friendly neighborhoods needs to be appreciated and protected at least as much as does the ecology of natural environments.

22. Especially in urban America, develop economic strategies aimed at providing more job opportunities for young males, especially poorly educated minority males, since jobless young men are less likely to marry and are less desirable as marriage partners.
23. Establish community outreach programs to involve fathers in caring for their children and the mothers of their children, knowing that the reason to strengthen the paternal role is to foster marriage, not to foster substitutes for marriage.
24. Link advocacy for children to advocacy for marriage. While advocating better programs for children, also insist that no children's program, however well-funded and well-designed, can or ought to substitute for a stably married two-parent home.
25. Develop mentoring programs to encourage young scholars, especially scholars of color, to see the importance of marriage and to develop the skills for conducting high-quality research.
26. Make current marriage research databases more widely available to scholars and researchers in training.
27. Develop better strategies for translating and disseminating basic and applied research findings to leaders of civil society and the general public.
28. Scholars and others should consider revising their methodology in order to include families in the definition of civil society.
29. Develop strategies that will result in more and broader segments of the U.S. population seeking marriage education and marriage therapy/counseling.
30. Determine the long-term effectiveness of current marriage education programs, especially for divorce prevention.
31. Determine the active ingredients in effective marriage education programs in order to define the core information and skills that should be included in every program.
32. Promote education for successful marriage as a regular part of school curricula. Include understanding of the historical roots of marriage, its desirability as an environment for childrearing, and its psychological, moral, legal, and economic requirements.

33. Develop better procedures whereby parents can be informed about, and have some input into, what teachers are teaching children about marriage, procreation, and family life.
34. High school textbooks, when talking about marriage, should make character education a master theme, rather than framing it only in terms of health.
35. Educators should consider teaching about marriage and love through great works of literature, art, and scholarship that examine these themes.
36. Begin a national conversation about Black marriages.
37. Excite and mobilize Black intellectual leaders, community activists, and institutions (particularly Black churches and colleges) around the goal of strengthening Black marriages.
38. Develop better knowledge about marriage formation and marriage success in communities of color.
39. Make marriage education widely available to all couples who seek it, with a special focus on low-income communities and communities of color.
40. Develop and disseminate effective, research-based marriage preparation and enhancement programs suited for culturally diverse and low-income communities.
41. Require all engaged couples in your congregation to participate in a theologically-informed and research-informed marriage preparation program.
42. Incorporate marriage mentoring, including lay marriage mentoring, as a regular part of congregational life.
43. Enlist more clergy as leaders for marriage in all communities, including the African American community and other communities of color.
44. Organize religious congregations into Community Marriage Policies and other community partnerships for offering premarital and marriage education and for speaking with a common voice for marriage.
45. Churches should join with government, the market, and other



institutions of civil society to launch a constructive critique of media images of marriage and family.

46. Churches should retrieve, in a critical manner, their marriage and family traditions.
47. Churches should help society understand that public policy should not and cannot maintain “value neutrality” on family matters.
48. Convey to all members of your congregation that marriage is not just a private matter, but an accountable promise before God and the faith community.
49. Create a national Interfaith Council on Marriage devoted to strengthening marriage in U.S. houses of worship and in the nation.
50. Youth pastors should help to reconnect marriage and childbearing in the minds of young people.
51. Divinity schools and other institutes that train clergy should incorporate the best scholarship on marriage and families into their training programs.
52. For every grant or charitable gift aimed at ameliorating the harmful impact of family fragmentation on children and on society, offer another aimed at strengthening marriage.
53. Congress should pass a resolution stating that the first question of policy makers regarding all proposed domestic legislation is whether it will strengthen or weaken the institution of marriage.
54. Work with state legislators to win passage of new laws offering financial and other incentives, such as reduced marriage license fees, tax credits, and shorter waiting periods, to couples who choose to participate in pre-marriage education.
55. Work with members of Congress to win passage of legislation increasing federal funding for marriage education and support programs serving low-income communities.
56. Work with state and local officials, educators, and others to create policies adding high-quality marriage and relationship education to the public school curriculum.

57. Work with state legislators to reduce unnecessary divorce by reforming divorce laws, primarily by combining longer waiting periods for divorce with stronger provisions for family courts to refer couples to marriage education.
58. Encourage policy makers to provide pilot-project funding for community marriage initiatives.
59. Make the case for linking marriage and two-parent families to the public policy goals of reducing poverty and increasing child well-being.
60. Make the case that supporting marriage can reduce the public costs connected to income support and social service programs.
61. Measure the effects of public policy and public opinion on the stability and quality of marriage.
62. End marriage penalties for low-income Americans by guaranteeing that any low-income couple who suffers a financial loss due to the decision to marry (usually through the loss of benefits) is legally entitled to a payment or tax credit from the federal government equal to the amount of the loss.
63. Create a blue-ribbon Commission on Marriage charged with leading a civil, serious public conversation about the meaning and possible future of marriage in the U.S. and establishing national goals for improving our Leading Marriage Indicators.
64. Create social security and other tax benefits for a parent who wants to stay home and care for young children.
65. Create new educational credits or vouchers, to be used for high school, vocational, college, graduate, or postgraduate education, available to parents who leave the paid labor force for a period of time to care for their children.
66. Add a marriage message to teen-pregnancy prevention programs, educating teenagers about how marriage is the best context in which to raise children.
67. Increase the Child Tax Credit from \$1,000 to \$5,000 per child.
68. Reform housing policies to promote family formation by developing

- pilot projects within public housing to allow married fathers of welfare-receiving families to live in public housing with their families without a rental surcharge for up to 18 months.
69. Recognize that high rates of family fragmentation impose extraordinary costs on taxpayers and that reducing those costs through state and federal marriage-strengthening programs is a legitimate concern of government.
  70. Increase public scrutiny and regulation of the fertility industry.
  71. Create forums for thoughtful examination of the various possible legal and public policy solutions to the issue of same-sex unions, evaluating each proposed solution according to whether it would be likely to help or hurt the goal of strengthening marriage.
  72. Integrate marriage education into the programs offered by family courts.
  73. Reform court-connected divorce education and mediation programs so that they seek to facilitate reconciliations, rather than merely expedite the divorce process.
  74. Fund evaluation research to see which divorce education programs meet the goal of both reducing divorce acrimony *and* preventing unnecessary divorce.
  75. Offer (or mandate) a remarriage and stepfamily education workshop for couples where one or both parties have a child from a previous relationship.
  76. Create a one- or two-year waiting period for unilateral divorce.
  77. Protect the legal boundaries of marriage, clearly distinguishing married couples from other personal relations.
  78. In law and policy, including tax policy, treat the married couple as a social, legal, and financial unit.
  79. Inform members of the legal profession about developments in the social sciences and in marriage education indicating that we as a society can and should reduce divorce and unmarried parenthood.
  80. Lead a dialogue about possible pro-marriage legal reforms, including covenant marriage, collaborative divorce, making mutual consent

the basis for divorce in long-term marriages and marriages with children, and requiring counseling before granting divorces in these situations.

81. Expand children's rights to include the right to a natural biological heritage (a father's sperm and a mother's egg) and the right to know their biological parents.
82. Reassess current trends in family law, in such areas as child custody, adoption, and divorce, with an eye toward promoting marital and childrearing stability.
83. The National Center for Health Statistics, the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute for Mental Health, and state public health departments should make collecting and analyzing data on marriage and divorce an important priority.
84. Fundamentally reassess the current state-federal Child Support Enforcement Program, seeking whenever possible to foster not simply more child support but also more marriage and more fatherhood.
85. The President of the United States should issue a brief annual report to the nation on the state of fatherhood and marriage.
86. Expand graduate and postgraduate training opportunities in marital therapy.
87. Encourage consumers to ask therapists to declare their value positions with regard to marital commitment.
88. Educate the therapeutic community on the benefits of marriage and work to improve negative professional attitudes toward marriage.
89. Create visible communities of therapists who are pro-marriage and who are developing educational models for working with distressed couples.
90. Family therapists and counselors should help couples identify the likely pressure points in a marriage, such as the birth of a first child, and guide them toward the steps that can help their marriage.
91. In educational textbooks and other scholarly work, treat marriage as a basic societal institution with many dimensions, rather than

- examining marriage only, or mainly, from a psychological or therapeutic perspective.
92. Encourage your medical facility to offer marriage and parenting education programs such as “Boot Camp for New Dads” or the “Becoming Parents Program.”
  93. For married couples with children at home, aim for an overall commitment to paid employment that does not exceed sixty hours per week.
  94. Create personnel policies and work environments that respect and favor the marital commitment.
  95. Assure employees that they won’t lose their place on the corporate ladder if they take family leave.
  96. Create personnel policies and work environments that permit parents to spend more time with their children. For instance, job protection and other benefits for short term (up to six months) parental leave, and job preferences and other benefits, such as graduated re-entry and educational and training benefits, for long-term (up to five years) parental leave.
  97. Reduce the practice of continually uprooting and relocating married couples with children.
  98. Encourage journalism on marriage and family life as a professional specialty and as a track for advancement.
  99. For editors of popular magazines and websites aimed at teenage girls and teenage boys, realize that many teenagers are intensely interested in thinking about the kind of person they might marry, and that they would enjoy and benefit from good articles about marriage.
  100. Media organizations should use their power to promote positive images of men and fatherhood, especially in Black America.
  101. Love your spouse and children, or encourage someone else who’s married to love their spouse and children!

*\*These 101 ideas are offered by David Blankenbom and Linda Malone-Colón, and do not necessarily represent the views of the scholarly contributors to this Marriage Index.*

# HOW CAN YOU USE THE MARRIAGE INDEX?

## *1. Publicize this Index:*

- Write a letter to the editor, submit an op-ed to a newspaper, or write an article for a magazine or journal to highlight the importance of improving our Leading Marriage Indicators.
- Share this Index with your community, civic, religious, and online networks.

## *2. Institutionalize this Index:*

- Policy makers, opinion shapers, and leaders of civil society: Please introduce the Marriage Index to your colleagues and explain to them its importance and uses.
- Encourage your networks to publish and annually review the Marriage Index.

## *3. Customize this Index:*

- Customize it for a particular ethnic, racial, or religious community—for example, see the “African American Marriage Index” on page 25.
- Customize it for a particular geographical area, such as a state (e.g. the Minnesota Marriage Index) or a region (e.g. the Midwest Marriage Index).

## *4. Mobilize to improve America's Index score of 60.3:*

- Pick one or more of the 101 ideas to improve our national score of 60.3, and work personally to achieve the goal or goals.
- Join or support an organization devoted specifically to strengthening marriage in the United States.

5. *Visualize a nation that improves its Leading Marriage Indicators so that each year:*

A greater proportion of  
adults are realizing their  
dreams of enduring,  
happy marriage



A greater proportion  
of children are growing  
up with their own two  
married parents.

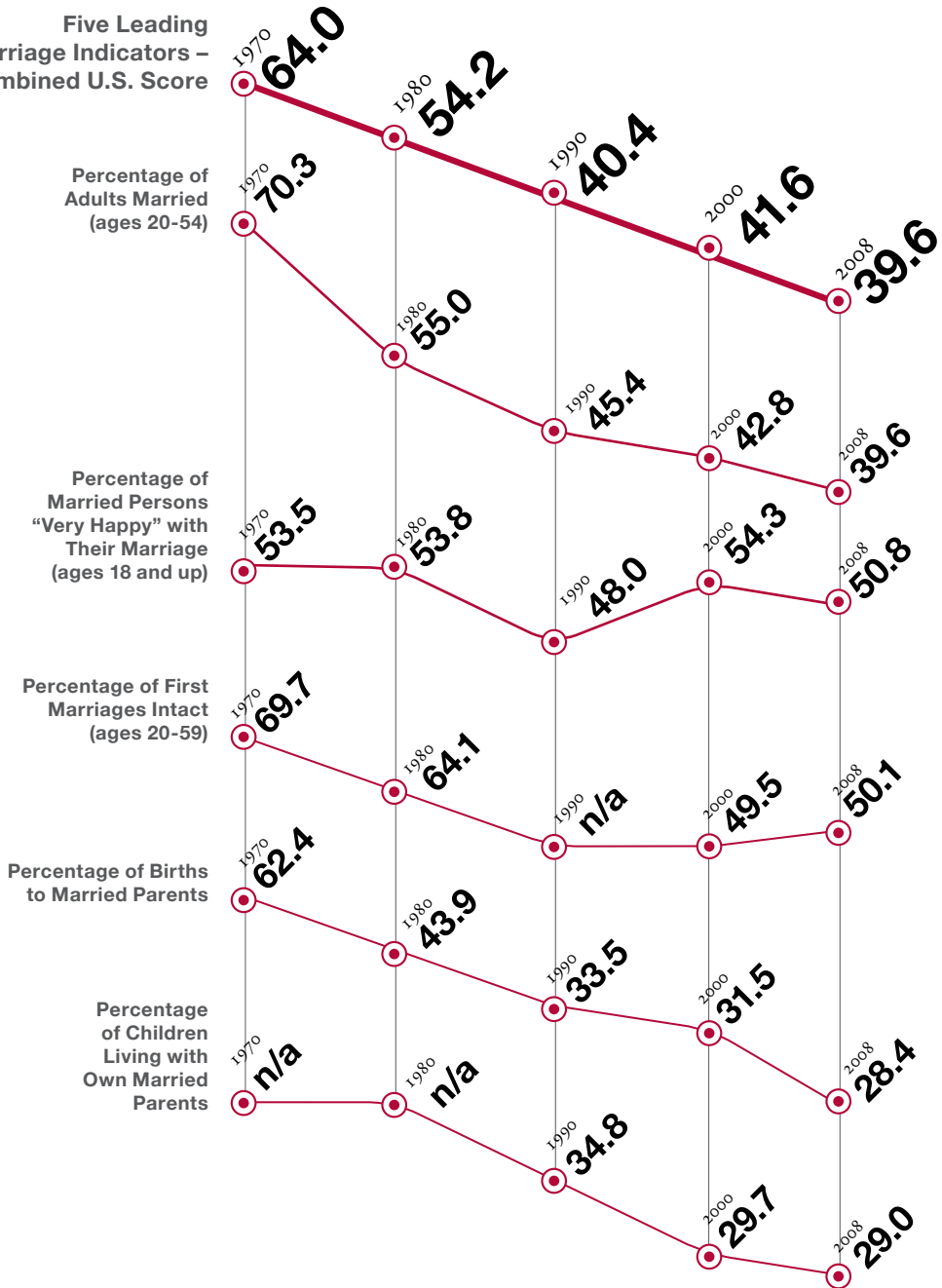




# AFRICAN AMERICAN MARRIAGE INDEX

*Monitoring the Nation's Leading Marriage Indicators for African Americans*

Five Leading Marriage Indicators – Combined U.S. Score



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# NOTES, SOURCES, AND ENDNOTES:

## *Notes:*

1. Regarding the Marriage Index, “2008” represents latest data available. Datum for “Percentage of First Marriages Intact” is from 2004 and “Percentage of Births to Married Parents” is from 2007.
2. Regarding the Marriage Index, Percentage of Married Persons “Very Happy” with Their Marriage, 1970: Datum is from 1973, the first year it became available.
3. Regarding the Marriage Index, Percentage of Children Living with Their Own Married Parents: We include children living with their adoptive mother and father under “own married parents.” The law treats adopted children just as if they were biological children, and on most outcomes, children raised in adoptive, intact married households fare just as well as children raised in biological, intact married households. They are, however, somewhat more likely to suffer from psychological or identity problems as adolescents and adults. See W. Bradford Wilcox and Robin Fretwell Wilson, “Bringing up Baby: Adoption, Marriage, and the Best Interests of the Child,” *William & Mary Bill of Rights Journal* 14 (2006): 883-908.
4. For sources of the ideas presented in “How Can We Improve America’s Current Score of 60.3?,” Blankenhorn and Malone-Colón are grateful to colleagues and contributors for sharing ideas. See also Linda Malone-Colón, *Responding to the Black Marriage Crisis*, Research Brief No. 6 (New York: Institute for American Values, June 2007). Linda Malone-Colón and Alex Roberts, *Marriage and the Well-Being of African American Boys*, Research Brief No. 2 (New York: Institute for American Values, November, 2006). *Marriage and the Law: A Statement of Principles* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2006). Lorraine Blackman, et. al., *The Consequences of Marriage for African Americans* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2005). *Can Government Strengthen Marriage* (New York: National Fatherhood Initiative, Institute for Marriage and Public Policy, and Institute for American Values, 2004). *What Next for the Marriage Movement?* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2004). *The Marriage Movement: A Statement of Principles* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2000).

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5. Regarding the African American Marriage Index, “2008” represents latest data available. Datum for “Percentage of First Marriages Intact” is from 2004 and “Percentage of Births to Married Parents” is from 2007.
6. Regarding the African American Marriage Index, Percentage of Married Persons “Very Happy” with Their Marriage, each year represents the average of two years. This is because the dataset for these numbers are based on a small sample, and averaging the percentages of two years allows us to partially correct this defect.

The actual years are as follows: 1970 represents the average of 1973-1974; 1980 the average of 1980-1982; 1990 the average of 1990-1992; 2000 the average of 2000-2002; and 2008 the average of 2006-2008.

*Sources for The Marriage Index:*

**1. PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS MARRIED (AGES 20-54).** Percentage of persons age 20-54 who are married. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Marital Status Subject Report, PC (2)-4C, *Census of Population: 1970* (1972), 1-4; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Marital Characteristics Subject Report, PC 80-2-4C, *Census of Population: 1980* (1985), 1-2; U.S. Bureau of the Census, General Population Characteristics, CP-1-1, *Census of Population: 1990* (1991), 45; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 537, *America's Families and Living Arrangements: March 2000* (2001), 11; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2008," Table A1, All Races (<http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2008/tabA1-all.xls>).

**2. PERCENTAGE OF MARRIED PERSONS "VERY HAPPY" WITH THEIR MARRIAGE (AGES 18 AND UP).** Percentage of married persons "very happy" with their marriage. General Social Survey, Social Change Report No. 53, *Changes in Family Structure, Family Values, and Politics, 1972-2006* (2008), 33; General Social Survey (GSS), 2008, e-mail correspondence with GSS staff, July 7, 2009.

**3. PERCENTAGE OF FIRST MARRIAGES INTACT (AGES 20-59).** Percentage of ever-married women ages 20-59 still in first marriage. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Marital Status Subject Report, PC (2)-4C, *Census of Population: 1970* (1972), 7-12; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Marital Characteristics Subject Report, PC 80-2-4C, *Census of Population: 1980* (1985), 3-5; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-70, No. 97, *Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriage and Divorces: 2001* (2005), 7; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income Program and Participation, "Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 2004," Table 3, All Races (<http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/marital-hist/2004/Table3,2004.xls>).

**4. PERCENTAGE OF BIRTHS TO MARRIED PARENTS.** Percentage of all births that were to married parents. Child Trends Data Bank, *Percentage of Births to Unmarried Women*, Table 1, (<http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/>

tables/75\_Table\_1.htm); National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 57, No. 12, *Births: Preliminary Data for 2007* (2009), 13.

**5. PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN LIVING WITH OWN MARRIED PARENTS.** Based on conversations with U.S. Census Bureau staff members, we know that for the period covering 1970-1980 the Census Bureau did not detail the relationship of children to their caregiving parents. Thus, the percentages for these years are estimates. Datum for 1970 reflects the percentage of children who live in married couple families where the husband and wife have been married once. It thus erroneously includes children who were born out of wedlock and have one married stepparent, and fails to include children of unions where at least one parent is remarried. It does not include adopted children. Datum for 1980 reflects Hernandez's estimation based on combining data from his own studies. It does not include adopted children. For 1990-2008, percentage of children under 18 who live with their two married biological parents, or who live with their adoptive mother and father. (2001 datum shown for 2000 and 1991 datum shown for 1990.) U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of the Population, Vol. II, 4B, *Persons by Family Characteristics*, (1973), Tables 1 and 8; Donald J. Hernandez, *America's Children: Resources from Family, Government, and the Economy* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1993), 64-65 (see footnote 17 on p. 64); Current Population Reports, Series P-70-38, *The Diverse Living Arrangements of Children: Summer 1991* (1994), 3-4; Current Population Reports, Series P-70, No. 104, *Living Arrangements of Children: 2001*, (2005), 3; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2008," Table C9, All Races (<http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2008/tabC9-all.xls>)

*Sources for the African American Marriage Index:*

**1. PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS MARRIED (AGES 20-54).** Percentage of Black persons age 20-54 who are married. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Marital Status Subject Report, PC (2)-4C, *Census of Population: 1970* (1972), 27-30; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Marital Characteristics Subject Report, PC 80-2-4C, *Census of Population: 1980* (1985), 13-14; U.S. Bureau of the Census, General Population Characteristics, CP-1-1, *Census of Population: 1990* (1991), 45; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2000," Table A1, page 19 (<http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/p20-537/2000/tabA1.pdf>); Current Population Survey, "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2008," Table A1, Black Alone (<http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2008/tabA1-blkalone.xls>).

**2. PERCENTAGE OF MARRIED PERSONS “VERY HAPPY” WITH THEIR MARRIAGE (AGES 18 AND UP).** Percentage of married Black persons “very happy” with their marriage. General Social Survey.

**3. PERCENTAGE OF FIRST MARRIAGES INTACT (AGES 20-59).** Percentage of ever-married Black women ages 20-59 still in first marriage. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Marital Status Subject Report, PC (2)-4C, *Census of Population: 1970* (1972), 33-38 ; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Marital Characteristics Subject Report, PC 80-2-4C, *Census of Population: 1980* (1985), 15-17; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income Program and Participation, “Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 2001,” Table 3, Black Alone (<http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/marital-hist/p70-97/tab01-black.xls>); Survey of Income Program and Participation, “Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 2004,” Table 3, Black Alone (<http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/marital-hist/2004/tab3-blackalone.xls>).

**4. PERCENTAGE OF BIRTHS TO MARRIED PARENTS.** Percentage of all Black births that were to married parents. Child Trends Data Bank, *Percentage of Births to Unmarried Women*, Table 1, ([http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/tables/75\\_Table\\_1.htm](http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/tables/75_Table_1.htm)); National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 57, No. 12, *Births: Preliminary Data for 2007* (2009), 6.

**5. PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN LIVING WITH OWN MARRIED PARENTS.** Based on conversations with U.S. Census Bureau staff members, we know that for the period covering 1970-1980 the Census Bureau did not detail the relationship of children to their caregiving parents. Moreover, because of data limitations we are unable to gather reliable estimates for the Black population for this time period. For 1990-2008, percentage of Black children under 18 who live with their two married biological parents, or who live with their adoptive mother and father. (2001 datum shown for 2000 and 1991 datum shown for 1990.) U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-70-38, *The Diverse Living Arrangements of Children: Summer 1991* (1994), 3-4; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, P-70, No. 104, *Living Arrangements of Children: 2001* (2005), 3; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, “America’s Families and Living Arrangements: 2008,” Table C9, Black Alone (<http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2008/tabC9-blkalone.xls>).

*Endnotes:*

1. Robert Schoen et al., "Family Transitions in Young Adulthood," *Demography* 44, No. 4 (2007): 817-818. See also Larry L. Bumpass et al., "The Role of Cohabitation in Declining Rates of Marriage," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53, No. 4 (1991): 916; Larry Bumpass and Hsien-Hen Lu, "Trends in Cohabitation and Implications for Children's Family Contexts in the United States," *Population Studies* 54, No. 1 (2000): 32.
2. Norval D. Glenn et al., "Later First Marriage and Marital Success," paper delivered at American Sociological Association, August 2009.
3. M.D. Bramlett and W.D. Mosher, *Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Health Statistics, 2002), 18. For all races, the probability that a first marriage breaks up within ten years for age at first marriage is as follows: under 18, 48%; 18-19, 40%; 20-24, 29%; and 25 and over, 24%.
4. National Marriage Project, *The State of Our Unions 2008*, figure 18 (<http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/SOOU/2008update.pdf>).
5. *The State of Our Unions 2008*, figure 7.
6. David Popenoe, *Cohabitation, Marriage and Child Wellbeing: A Cross-National Perspective* (New Brunswick, NJ: The National Marriage Project, 2008), 16-17.
7. Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk: Growing Up in an Era of Family Upheaval* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997), 219.
8. Amato and Booth, *A Generation at Risk*, 11; Norval Glenn, "The Recent Trend in Marital Success in the United States," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53, No. 2 (1991): 261.
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10. W. Bradford Wilcox and Steven L. Nock, "What's Love Got To Do With It?: Equality, Equity, Commitment and Women's Marital Quality," *Social Forces* 84, No. 3 (2006): 1339.
11. W. Bradford Wilcox et al., *Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-Six Conclusions from the Social Sciences* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2005), 16.



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15. Wilcox et al., *Why Marriage Matters*, 13.
16. Cynthia Osborne and Sara McLanahan, "Partnership Instability and Child Well-Being," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69, (2007): 1075-1076.
17. "The Scholarly Consensus on Marriage," Center for Marriage and Families Fact Sheet No. 2 (New York: Institute for American Values, 2006).
18. Wilcox et al., *Why Marriage Matters*, 12.
19. Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur, *Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994), 58.
20. McLanahan and Sandefur, *Growing Up with a Single Parent*, 70-71.



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