



## Marriage Benefits Society

**Issue:** The family is the building block of society, and marriage is its foundation. Marriage between a man and woman<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>
- High school students in intact families have GPAs 11 percent higher than those from divorced families.<sup>3</sup>

### Church

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

### Family

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

### Market

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

### Government

- Married men are less likely to commit crimes<sup>10</sup> and acts of domestic violence.<sup>11</sup> Adolescents from intact families commit fewer violent acts of delinquency.<sup>12</sup>
- Parental divorce contributes to "externalizing behaviors," including weapon carrying, fighting, substance abuse, and binge drinking.<sup>13</sup>
- Married people are least likely to have mental disorders,<sup>14</sup> and have higher levels of emotional and psychological well-being than those who are single, divorced, or cohabiting.<sup>15</sup>

**Conclusion:** The intact, married family naturally delivers fundamental benefits to society. MARRI research available online<sup>16</sup> shows the many ways that marriage contributes to societal well-being.

<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.”

<sup>2</sup> 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>

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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>

<sup>5</sup> 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>

<sup>6</sup> 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>

<sup>7</sup> 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](http://successfulesingles.com/media_articles_files/The%20Case%20for%20Marriage:%20Why%20Married%20People%20Are%20Happier,%20Healthier,%20and%20Better%20off%20Financially.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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.”

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

James Coyne, M.J. Rohrbaugh, Varda Shoham, John S. Sonnega, John M. Nicklas, and James A. Cranford, “Prognostic Importance of Marital Quality for Survival of Congestive Heart Failure” *American Journal of Cardiology* 88, no. 5 (2001): 526-529. As cited in California Healthy Marriages Coalition, “Healthy Marriages, Mental Health. Research on the Alignment of Marital Outcomes and Mental Health.” Available at <http://camarriage.com/content/resources/7b8690b0-784f-46e7-af7d-438a9b064557.pdf>. Accessed 25 August 2011.

<sup>15</sup> 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](http://www.maxim.org.nz/files/pdf/psychological_benefits_of_marriage.pdf). Accessed 27 July 2011

<sup>16</sup> [www.marri.us](http://www.marri.us)