Reasons Why People Marry and Divorce FACT SHEET

UF | IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

SMART COUPLES
STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES AND RELATIONSHIPS TRAINING

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Key Findings

- 60% of marriages are first marriages for both partners, 20% for one partner with another partner who has married before, and 20% for both partners who have married before.[1]
- Couples who live together before marriage are more likely to divorce.[1]
- 67% of second marriages and 73% of third marriages end in divorce.[1]
- Only 6% of divorcees remarry each other.[1]
- The majority of divorces are initiated by only one party.[2]
- 69% of divorces are initiated by women. Women often carry the mental load and burden of raising children in a relationship and running a household.[1]
- Most divorces happen between year three and year seven of marriage.[2]
- Most divorced people—92%—know others who have been divorced.[2]
- Having friends who are divorced increases your risk of divorce.[1]
- Over 70% of couples report not understanding the realities or stages of marriage.[1]
- 63% of divorcees believe a better understanding of the commitments of marriage could have helped them to avoid divorce.[2]
- Lack of compatibility is the top reason for new couples to divorce, with 59% of couples who divorced in their first year citing this cause.[2]
- A lack of family support became a bigger issue as time went on [and] was the leading reason for divorce among those who ended their marriages within years two through eight.[2]

- Long-term couples were prompted to divorce by very serious issues, with infidelity and lack of intimacy causing most divorces once a couple had been married for nine or more years. In total, 34% of marriages among survey respondents ended due to an affair.[2]
- 66% of men and 74% of women think their partners should have worked harder to save the marriage.[1]
- The divorce rate steadily decreases from 40% to 30% as household income increases (i.e., divorce rates remain steady at about 30% once a couple has a household income around $200,000 per year; the divorce rates steadily decline again to 25% as a household income approaches $600,000; the divorce rates steadily climb back up to 30% when a household income exceeds $600,000 per year).[1]
- Divorce rates are higher among couples below the poverty line (46%).[1]

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- Couples who marry before age 32 experience lower divorce rates (i.e., couples who marry at 25 are 50% less likely to divorce compared with couples who marry at 20—but for those who marry after age 32, divorce rates increase at 5% per year until the age they are wed).[1]
- Couple divorce and marriage rates by ethnicity: Whites (15.1%/32.1%); Blacks (30.8%/17.3%); Hispanics (18.5%/33.2%).[1]
- Divorce rates by education level: high school or less (39% for men/37% for women); bachelor's degree or higher (26% for men/30% for women).[1]
- College-educated women are the most likely to have a lasting marriage (78% of women with a bachelor's degree have a marriage that lasts at least 20 years; just 49% of women with some college education reach this milestone; 40% of women with a high school education or less have a marriage that lasts 20 years or more).[1]
- 70% of children live with both parents who are married.[1]
- Having more children does not increase the risk of divorce.[1]

Top Divorcing States[1]

1. Nevada (4.2)
2. Oklahoma (3.7)
3. Arkansas (3.5)
4. Idaho/Wyoming (3.3)
5. Alabama/West Virginia (3.2)
6. Florida (3.1)
7. Alaska/Kentucky/Mississippi/Tennessee (3.0)
8. Colorado/Utah/Virginia (2.9)

Reasons for Divorce Prioritized[2]

1. Lack of family support (43%)
2. Infidelity of extra marital affairs (34%)
3. Lack of compatibility (31%)
4. Lack of intimacy (31%)
5. Too much conflict or arguing (31%)
6. Financial stress (24%)
7. Lack of commitment (23%)
8. Parenting differences (20%)
9. Marrying too young (10%)
10. Opposing values or morals (6%)
11. Substance abuse (3%)
12. Domestic violence (physical/emotional) (3%)
13. Pursuing different lifestyles (1%)

Reasons for Getting Married[2]

In order to understand the reasons why people end their marriages, we need to understand some of the reasons for why they choose to get married. Meeting needs and expectations are foundational to the motivation for getting married. For those who later divorced, financial security was a primary motivation for getting married, particularly for women.

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Reasons for Getting Married Prioritized[2]

1. Financial security (42%)
2. Companionship (39%)
3. Love (36%)
4. Formal act of making a commitment (34%)
5. To start a family (34%)
6. Convenience (28%)
7. Medical insurance (25%)
8. Legal reasons (16%)
9. Societal and family pressures (7%)

Key Connections Between Getting Married and Getting Divorced[2]

- When a person is motivated to marry by a specific desire that goes unfulfilled, this increases the chances the union will fail.
- Most couples who married for companionship, financial security, convenience, medical insurance, legal reasons or a desire to start a family blamed a lack of compatibility for their divorce.
- Couples who married due to societal or family pressures, on the other hand, were most likely to divorce due to extramarital affairs. These couples who felt pressure into entering into a commitment were less likely to keep it.
- And those who married as a formal act of commitment were more likely to end the marriage due to a lack of intimacy.

Warning Signs and Red Flags[2]

1. Lack of showing interest in one another (48%)
2. Poor conflict resolution (47%)
3. Avoiding each other (45%)
4. Lack of respect (38%)
5. Increased criticism to or from my partner (38%)
6. Poor communication (33%)
7. Substance abuse (31%)
8. Domestic violence (27%)
9. Disapproval of spouse from family/friends (21%)
10. Living different lifestyles (17%)
11. Marrying too young (12%)
12. Marrying too soon after meeting each other (12%)
13. Financial stress (10%)

What Could Have "Saved" Them from Divorcing[2]

- A better understanding of the commitment to marriage prior to marrying (63%)
- A better understanding of the values and morals of my partner prior to marrying (56%)
- Waiting longer to start a family (44%)
- Seeking professional help from a therapist or couples counselor (42%)
- Waiting longer to get married (40%)
- Living together prior to getting married (29%)
- I don't think our marriage could have been saved (5%)

Sources

[1]Forbes Advisor: "Revealing Divorce Statistics In 2024." Retrieved from **https://www.forbes.com/advisor/legal/divorce/divorce-statistics**

[2]Forbes Advisor: "Leading Causes of Divorce." Retrieved from **https://www.forbes.com/advisor/legal/divorce/common-causes-divorce**

Note: This online survey of 1,000 Americans who have been divorced or are currently getting a divorce was commissioned by Forbes Advisor and conducted by market research company OnePoll, in accordance with the Market Research Society's code of conduct. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 points with 95% confidence. This survey was overseen by the OnePoll research team, which is a member of the MRS and has corporate membership with the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR).