

# A Snapshot of Marriage In The United States

## Marriage



- People are getting married later in life. Median age for males is 27; for females it is 25. (*The National Marriage Project: The State of Our Unions 2006*)
- In a given year nearly half of all marriages are remarriages for one or both partners.
- The marriage rate (annual number of marriages per 1,000 unmarried adult women) continues to decline. It has dropped 50% (to 45.6) in fifty years. (*The National Marriage Project: The State of Our Unions 2003*)
- The marriage rate for African-Americans is considerably lower than for any other U.S. population group. (*U.S. Census Bureau, cited at*

*www.healthymarriageinfo.org*)

- Marriage trends for people in the age range of 35 to 44 suggest more lifelong singlehood. (*The National Marriage Project: The State of Our Unions 2004*)
- From 40% to 50% of Catholic marriages are between a Catholic and a non-Catholic; regional averages may be higher or lower.
- Virtually all Catholic dioceses require some form of marriage preparation for couples who wish to marry in the Catholic Church. (*Marriage Preparation in the Catholic Church: Getting It Right, 1995*).
- Within the first few years of marriage nearly half of all inter-church couples become same-church because one spouse or both change religious affiliation. (*Ministry to Interchurch Marriages: A National Study, 1999*)
- Roughly two-thirds of both married men and married women rate their marriages as “very happy.” (*The National Marriage Project: The State of Our Unions 2006*)

## Divorce

- There has been a modest decline in the divorce rate since it reached an all-time high in 1980; there are now 18 divorces (rather than 22) per 1,000 married women. (*The National Marriage Project: The State of Our Unions 2004*)
- The projected rate of divorcing still stands at around 50%—this represents the percentage of marriages (first and remarriage) entered into during a particular year that are projected to end in divorce or separation before one spouse dies. (*The National Marriage Project: The State of Our Unions 2004*)
- Approximately 60-67% of second marriages end in divorce, and about 74% of third marriages end in divorce.
- About one-third of adults who have ever been married and are still living have experienced a divorce. This percentage rises to 46% for the baby boom generation.
- Catholics are substantially less likely than Protestants to get divorced (25% versus 39%). (*The Barna Group, 2004*)
- One’s chances of divorce are diminished by such factors as: older age, higher income, more education, having a religious affiliation, absence of divorce in family of origin, and having a child after marriage. (*The National Marriage Project: The State of Our Unions 2006*)
- Twenty percent of first marriages end within the first five years. (*Family Research Council, The Family Portrait, 2004*).



## Cohabitation

- Cohabitation (sexual partners sharing a household) has increased 1100% in forty years. Over 50% of first marriages are preceded by cohabitation. (*The National Marriage Project: The State of Our Unions 2006*)
- Almost 40% of cohabiting households have children in them. (*The National Marriage Project: The State of Our Unions 2006*)



For further research on the state of marriage in the U.S. and its impact on society, see:

- David Popenoe and Barbara Whitehead, *The State of Our Unions*, 2006, The National Marriage Project, Rutgers University  
<http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/SOOU/SOOU2006.pdf>
- *What is marriage for? What do we know about the benefits of marriage for children and adults? How does marriage benefit the society?*  
Testimony of Barbara Dafoe Whitehead before the U.S. Senate, 2004  
<http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/Pub%20Whitehead%20Testimony%20Apr%2004.htm>
- *Ten Important Research Findings on Marriage and Choosing a Marriage Partner—Helpful Facts for Young Adults*, The National Marriage Project, 2004  
<http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/pubtentthingsyoungadults.htm>
- “*Marriage and Children: Coming Together Again*” in *The Social Health of Marriage in America*, The National Marriage Project, 2003  
<http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/SOOU/TEXTSOOU2003.htm>
- Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*, (Broadway, 2001)

[www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org)



**U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops**  
**National Pastoral Initiative on Marriage**  
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