The Vow Factor: Marriage, Divorce, and Family Formation and their Impact on Health and Well-being

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The Marriage Gap

Percent Currently in a First Marriage, NLSY79
Adults Ages 46-54, in 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than a H.S. degree</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S. degree</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree or more</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why do we care about the marriage gap?
Percent of cohabiting relationships disrupted after 5 years.


Family Instability
Percentage of children, living with their mothers, who experience three or more maternal partnerships by age 15.

Family Instability, Cohabitation, and Marriage
Unmarried Parents' Relationship at Birth

- 51% Cohabiting
- 32% Visiting
- 9% Little or no contact
- 8% Friends

Five years later:

- Half of the cohabiting couples were no longer living together.
- Three-fourths of the couples in visiting relationships were no longer together.
- By the child's third birthday:
  - two-thirds of mothers had experienced at least one partnership change,
  - more than a third had experienced at least two changes,
  - and nearly 20 percent had experienced *three or more* changes.
Family Complexity
Family Inequality
Percentage of Children Living with Unmarried Mothers, by Mother’s Education, 1980 – 2010. (Source: Special tabulations pursuant to Stykes and Williams, 2013, from the IPUMS database.)
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What difference does not living with two parents make for children?

Effects seem to be larger on emotional problems than on cognitive development.

Effects seem to be larger for boys than for girls.

What are the effects of divorce and cohabitation dissolution on adults?

Economic effects of divorce on women have declined.

Economic effects of the end of cohabitation on women have increased.

What are the benefits of marriage for men and women?

Marriage seems to provide men with a boost in earnings and health.

The benefits are smaller for women.

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