



# Benefits of marriage for adults

Last updated September 15, 2011

*Despite the depiction of married life in popular media as drudgery, social science has consistently shown that married people fair well across a number of measures of wellbeing.*

- Married people show the lowest lifetime prevalence of alcoholism. [1]
- Married people have the lowest suicide rates. [2]
- Married people have the lowest morbidity rates compared to people in other family forms. [3]
- The risk of early death has been shown to decrease with every year of marriage. [4]
- Married adults are more likely to experience better mental health. One study in the Journal of Health and Social Behavior concluded, “One of the most consistent findings in psychiatric epidemiology is that married persons enjoy better health than the unmarried. Researchers have consistently found the highest rates of mental disorder among the divorced and separated, the lowest rates among the married and intermediate rates for the single and widowed.” [5]

## *Benefits for women:*

- Married women have a lower probability of living in poverty. [6]
- Married mothers have lower levels of depression compared to cohabiting and single mothers [7]
- Married women are at a lower risk of experiencing domestic violence compared to dating and cohabiting women. [8]
- Married women are less likely to be victims of crime compared to single and divorced women. [9]

## *Benefits for men:*

- For men, marriage provides as many economic benefits as education. Social scientists have observed faster salary increases among married men compared to single men. Some scholars have speculated that marriage increases labour productivity among men. [10]
- Married men consume less alcohol compared to single men. [11]
- Married men are less likely to be criminally involved compared to single men.[12]
- Married men show more affection to their children and partners compared to cohabiting men. [13]

## Endnotes

- [1] Robins, L. N., Regier, D. A. (1991). *Psychiatric disorders in America: The epidemiologic catchment area study*. New York: The Free Press, p. 103.
- [2] Coombs, R. H. (1991). Marital status and personal wellbeing: A literature review. *Family Relations* 40 (1): 97-102.
- [3] Joung, I.M., van de Mheen, H., Stronks, K., van Poppel, F.W.A, Mackenbach, J.P. (1994). Difference in self-reported morbidity by marital status and by living arrangement. *International Journal of Epidemiology* 23 (1): 91-97.
- [4] Waite, L.J., Gallagher, M. (2000). *The case for marriage*. New York: Doubleday, p. 60.
- [5] Williams, D. R., Takeuchi, D. T., Adair, R. K. (1992). Marital status and psychiatric disorders among blacks and whites. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 33 (2): 140-157.
- [6] Lichter, D.T., Roempke, D., Brown, B.J., (2003). Is marriage a panacea? Union formation among economically disadvantaged unwed mothers. *Social Problems* 50: 60-86.
- [7] Wilcox, W.B. et al. (2005) *Why marriage matters, second edition. Twenty-six conclusions from the social sciences*. New York: Institute for American Values, p. 11. Retrieved September 14, 2011 from [http://americanvalues.org/pdfs/why\\_marriage\\_matters2.pdf](http://americanvalues.org/pdfs/why_marriage_matters2.pdf)
- [8] *Ibid.*
- [9] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- [10] Lerman, R.I. (2002, July). *Marriage and the economic well-being of families with children: A review of the literature*. Washington: Urban Institute and American University, p. 20. Retrieved September 14, 2011 from [http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/410541\\_LitReview.pdf](http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/410541_LitReview.pdf)
- [11] Wilcox, *Why marriage matters*, p. 6.
- [12] *Ibid.*
- [13] *Ibid.*