



When it comes to the benefits of marriage, the jury is out

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Is marriage good for you? The research continues.

In San Francisco, the U.S. federal court hearing on California's Proposition 8, which prohibits same-sex marriage in the state, has heard expert testimony that significant health benefits accrue to married people relative to singletons, and the ban is putting gay people at greater risk of depression, suicide and substance abuse.

An economist also outlined the fiscal benefits for the cash-strapped state of letting gay couples marry, including increased consumer spending (and not just on weddings — married couples spend more in general), school district funding and tax revenue.

Meanwhile, back among the heterosexual set, who still have a monopoly on marriage in all but five states, a new analysis of U.S. census data by the Pew Research Center claims marriage is an excellent economic deal for men, whose income outstrips those who don't marry.

This is a change from 40 years ago, when a stigma, and vastly inferior salaries, greeted working wives, and so married men typically took a financial hit relative to bachelors. Now, women have more education and make more money, often more money than the mister. What's in it for women now? Good question.

Some married people, I find, sell the joys of conjugality a little too hard, encouraging any couples who have been dating longer than a year to follow them to Hitchville post haste. They do this when they're not half-jokingly trying to remember the last sighting of their sex lives.

And then there are those who have taken an interest in the institution in general, like the Institute of Marriage and the Family Canada, which decried a recent "[Divorce Fair](#)" in Halifax, an event that put prospective splitters in touch with lawyers, life coaches and other professionals.

Among the fair's innovations was to hold separate days for men and women, in part to avert surprise meetings between spouses, although such an encounter would likely get the ball rolling one way or the other.

Institute spokesperson Andrea Mrozek lamented the haste with which couples now contemplate divorce instead of sticking it out, and accused the divorce fair of "capitalizing on moments of difficulty or despair in people's lives."

But where are the institute's warnings for those who marry in haste in the first place? What if this "difficulty or despair" is a product of being married to the wrong person?

Personally, I don't knock marriage, but neither am I likely to try it. While it seems to work swimmingly for some people, contribute to healthier, happier lives and all that, it remains the leading cause of divorce.