

# Quick Facts about the Breakdown of Marriage and Family

## Do we need an institution that unites kids with their moms and dads? Yes or no?

- Since 1980, the marriage rate is down about 45%.
  - 41% of children are born to unmarried mothers (73% for African Americans)<sup>1</sup>
  - 71% of poor families are not married<sup>2</sup>
  - Marriage decreases the probability a child will live in poverty by 82%<sup>3</sup>
  - Fatherless or single parent homes produce children who are
    - **2 times** more likely to be **arrested for juvenile crime**<sup>4</sup>
    - **2 times** more likely to be treated for **emotional and behavioral problems**<sup>5</sup>
    - **2 times** more likely to be **suspended or expelled from school**<sup>6</sup>
    - 33% more likely to drop out of school<sup>7</sup>
    - **3 times** more likely to **end up in jail by age 30**<sup>8</sup>
  - **Compared to a married mother and father,**<sup>9</sup> children living with an unmarried mother and biological father are 4 times more likely to be sexually, physically or emotionally abused, and 3 times more likely to be physically, emotionally, or educationally neglected
  - **Compared to a married mother and father,**<sup>9</sup> children living with an unmarried mother and a boyfriend are 11 times more likely to be sexually, physically or emotionally abused, and 6 times more likely to be physically, emotionally, or educationally neglected.
- ### The effects of marriage breakdown on children continue into adulthood.
- Compared to intact families, children raised by single parents are
    - 50% more likely to suffer poverty as adults<sup>10</sup>
  - Compared to intact families, girls raised by single parents are
    - 2 times more likely to have a child outside of marriage<sup>11</sup>
- ### Attitudes about marriage call for need to promote the reality of marriage
- High school seniors: 56%—OK to be unmarried and have children<sup>12</sup>
  - 18- to 39-year-olds: 30%—“Marriage is very important if a couple has children together”<sup>13</sup>
  - 18- to 29-year-olds: 44%—Marriage is obsolete<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Center for Disease Control, National Vital Statistics, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Rector, “Marriage: America’s Greatest Weapon Against Child Poverty,” Heritage Foundation, 2010, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/09/marriage-america-s-greatest-weapon-against-child-poverty>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Chris Coughlin and Samuel Vuchinich, “Family Experience in Preadolescence and the Development of Male Delinquency,” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 58, no. 2 (1996): 491–501.

<sup>5</sup> Deborah A. Dawson, “Family Structure and Children’s Health and Well-Being: Data from the 1988 National Health Interview Survey on Child Health,” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 53, no. 3 (August 1991): 573–584.

<sup>6</sup> Wendy D. Manning and Kathleen A. Lamb, “Adolescent Well-Being in Cohabiting Married, and Single-Parent Families,” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 65, no. 4 (2003): 876–893. Data from Add Health study. See also Dawson, “Family Structure and Children’s Health and Well-Being: Data from the 1988 National Health Interview Survey on Child Health.”

<sup>7</sup> Timothy Biblarz and Greg Gottainer, “Family Structure and Children’s Success: A Comparison of Widowed and Divorced Single-Mother Families,” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 62 (May 2000): 533–548.

<sup>8</sup> Rector, “Marriage,” Heritage Foundation.

<sup>9</sup> Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect, U.S. Dept. Health and Human Services, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Rector, “Marriage,” Heritage Foundation.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Bradford Wilcox, *State of our Unions, Marriage in America 2009*, data from University of Michigan, <http://www.stateofourunions.org/2009/index.php>.

<sup>13</sup> Gallup Poll, May 2006, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/23041/americans-complexrelationship-marriage.aspx>.

<sup>14</sup> Pew: *The Decline of Marriage and Rise of New Families*.

