

# Marriage

**IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE  
ESPECIALLY FOR THE KIDS (AND THE WHOLE COMMUNITY)**

## MARRIAGE IS A GIFT FROM GOD TO MEN, WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND SOCIETY.

In marriage, a husband and wife form an exclusive and lifelong bond, forge a shared financial future, promise to take care of each other “in sickness and in health,” and provide a stable and loving home for any children they are blessed with. Marriage is the foundation of the family, which is the primary place where we all learn to love and be loved, to live in community with others, and to care for the most vulnerable (e.g. children, the elderly, the sick). This flyer provides some concrete examples from the social sciences of a truth long taught by the Catholic Church: marriage matters to men, women, children, and society.

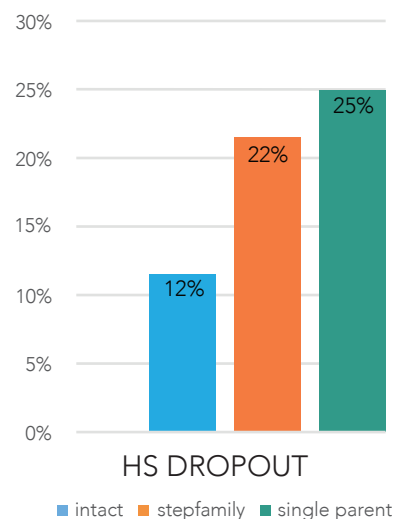
## MARRIAGE MATTERS FOR CHILDREN

Children raised by married parents tend to enjoy more stability, more financial resources, more consistent discipline, and more attention than their peers in other families. Because of this, they are more likely to flourish in life, and to avoid detours that can unsettle their futures, compared with children raised in other family situations. Princeton sociologist Sara McLanahan put it this way: “Children who grow up in a household with only one biological parent are worse off, on average, than children who grow up in a household with both of their biological parents... regardless of whether the resident parent remarries.” This does not mean children who are raised in single-parent or step-families necessarily do badly; no situation is hopeless, God can heal all wounds, and the Church family is there to help.

But the social science is clear: children who are raised by their own married mother and father are more likely to thrive. What follows are a few real life examples.

### Graduating from High School

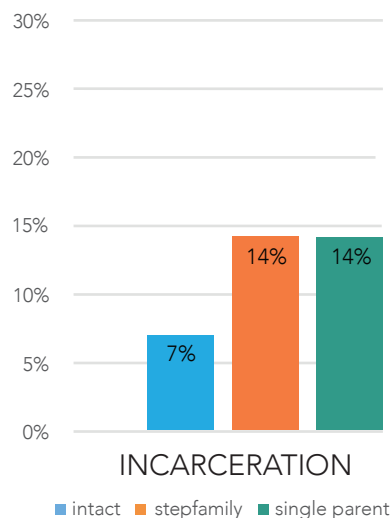
This figure shows that children from an intact family with married parents are about half as likely to drop out of high school, compared to children from single-parent and step-families. When children from an intact family enter into adulthood they are also more likely to work full-time and succeed in the workplace.



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Note: figure adjusted for maternal education, race, ethnicity, and mother's age at birth.

## Boys: Avoiding Jail

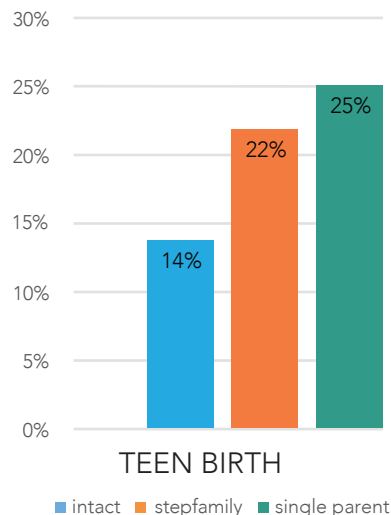
Boys who are raised by both their father and mother are significantly less likely to end up in jail or prison by the time they reach 30, as this figure details. As data indicates, boys who have the benefit of the presence, attention, and oversight of both their parents, and especially their father, are less likely to run afoul of the law.



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Note: figure adjusted for maternal education, race, ethnicity, and mother's age at birth.

## Girls: Teen Pregnancy

Girls who are raised by both their father and mother are significantly less likely to end up pregnant as a teenager. They are also less likely to be sexually active as teens when they enjoy the stability, attention, affection, and monitoring associated with growing up in an intact family. Here too, a father's presence is particularly important.



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Note: figure adjusted for maternal education, race, ethnicity, and mother's age at birth.

## MARRIAGE MATTERS FOR SPOUSES AND THE COMMUNITY

It's not just children who benefit from marriage; spouses benefit too. Women and men who get and stay married tend to be healthier, happier, and better off financially, compared to their peers who never marry, divorce, or divorce and remarry. Men, for instance, live about nine years longer if they get and stay married. Women are more financially stable in retirement if they are married, as a recent report from the U.S. Department of Labor noted. And communities with a greater share of married parents tend to be safer and more likely to promote economic opportunity for disadvantaged children in their midst.

## HOPE FOR THE HURTING

Marriage can be difficult at times.\* Spouses can face periods of disappointment or disillusionment, as well as times of added stress caused by illness, job loss, or a loved one's death. But husbands and wives facing trials should not despair. Most couples who experience a spell of unhappiness but remain married see their marriages improve. One study found that "Two out of three unhappily married adults who avoided divorce or separation ended up happily married five years later." If you are struggling in your marriage, seek help from a priest or deacon, marriage-friendly counselor, or wise friend. There are also good resources for couples looking for help (for example, see [www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org)). Above all, pray! Ask God for the graces you need to live a happy, holy marriage, knowing that it will benefit you, your community, and especially your children.

\*Spouses facing domestic violence should seek immediate help, for instance by calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233 and by removing themselves and any children from danger (e.g., temporary or permanent separation if necessary).

For resources to strengthen your marriage and family, please visit the For Your Marriage website: [www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org)

More information on social science and marriage and family issues can be found at the Institute for Family Studies website: <http://ifstudies.org>

