

A letter from Jeff Kemp, WFC Executive Director



November 1997

During a single day, we come across many predictions and forecasts for the future that vary in reliability and accuracy. Tabloids are full of wild speculation. Newspapers print the spreads on the weekend football games, as well as five-day weather reports and economic forecasts for the coming year.

What is the marriage forecast for Washington state? What can we do today to strengthen our marriages or prepare for future marriage? How can we create an environment that will support the marriages and families around us? What can we do to give young people a vision for what marriage can be for them?

We cannot guarantee the future implications of decisions we make today, but we can do our homework and make wise investments in the future through those choices and decisions. The *Washington Marriage Report* has been designed to help with that homework and those choices.

The family is the heart of our society—the life-giving part that nourishes and determines the health of our culture. Marriage provides the structural framework and relational lifeblood for family formation. Over time, marriage has proven to be a framework that holds its integrity through many storms, but it hasn't endured the storms unscathed. And while a strong framework alone will not guarantee a healthy, full relationship, you wouldn't want to lay carpet and hang pictures until you were sure the walls were securely attached to the foundation.

Which factors weaken marriage? Which behaviors, attitudes and institutions strengthen marriage? The *Washington Marriage Report* is comprised of two scales that will track some key indicators of the strength of marriage in Washington state from year to year. These scales are the Marriage Health Indicators, which include five behaviors that impact marriage relationships, and the Marriage Confidence Indicators, which measure five beliefs Washingtonians hold about marriage. Measured annually, these indicators will provide credible information about the strength of marriage in this state and may reveal some steps individuals and institutions can take to strengthen marriage.

Our hope is that the *Washington Marriage Report* will help leaders in our society—church pastors, business owners, media messengers, educators, government officials and parents—to be factually equipped to make wise, informed decisions that will have a positive impact on their own marriage, the marriages impacted by their leadership and the institution of marriage itself.

From the youngest child to the oldest adult, the information in this report is relevant to everyone impacted by marriage—the married, the previously married, and the not-yet married. We all have a role to play in strengthening marriages ... from this day forward.

For families,

Jeff Kemp

Executive Summary

Nearly two-thirds of Washingtonians believe the typical marriage today is weaker than the typical marriage three decades ago.

But what does that mean, and how do we, as members of this community, go about improving marriage? Our beliefs and our behaviors are interwoven—we make decisions and choices based on our beliefs and principles, and those beliefs often reflect our personal experiences. The five descriptors selected to be part of the Marriage Health Index and the Marriage Confidence Index give a snapshot of the present condition of marriage. Taken together and measured over time, these two indexes will serve as a barometer for marriage, giving us an impression of where we are and an indication of where we are headed ... from this day forward.

Marriage Health Indicators

1 Nearly four of five (79%) Washington state adults have been married. Currently, 57 percent of the adult population in Washington is married.

2 Just more than one in four (27%) Washington state adults has experienced divorce. Currently, 9 percent of Washingtonians describe their marital status as divorced.

3 Nearly one of four (23%) adults in Washington state has cohabited without

being married. One in twenty (5%) currently live with a significant other outside of marriage.

4 One-third (33%) of those Washington state adults who have been or are married received premarital counseling before marriage.

5 On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means not at all strong and 10 means very strong, married Washington state adults rated their marriages an average 9.0. Seven of 10 (70%) married adults rated their marriage a 9 or 10, while less than 1 percent rated their marriage less than a 3.

Marriage Confidence Indicators

1 Almost nine of 10 adults (88%) disagreed with the statement, “Marriage is an old fashioned, outmoded institution,” and 70 percent strongly disagreed. Only one of 10 (11%) Washingtonians agreed with this statement.

2 When asked which of these points of view came closest to their own point of view, nearly two-thirds (64%) of Washington state adults said marriage should be considered a promise “‘til death do us part,” while one-third (32%) said marriage should be considered a promise “as long as love may last.”



3 Nearly all (94%) Washingtonians expect to be married for life. Only 3 percent of married, engaged, cohabiting, or never married adults do not expect their current or future marriages to be lifelong.

4 When asked about their expectations entering marriage, nine of 10 (90%) adults said they were optimistic about marriage. About two-thirds (66%) agreed they were “optimistic, with a fairly good clue about what marriage is going to be like,” while about one-quarter (24%) were

“optimistic, with little clue about what marriage is going to be like.” Only 7 percent of adults said, looking back, they had been pessimistic entering into marriage.

5 Eighty-six percent of Washington state adults agreed with the statement, “All things being equal, it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father.” Three-quarters of adults (74%) strongly agreed with this statement. More than one in 10 (12%) Washingtonians disagreed with this idea.



Summary of Marriage Health Indicators

	Currently	Ever
Washington state adults who are married:	57%	79%
Washington state adults who are divorced:	9%	27%
Washington state adults who have cohabited:	5%	23%
Washington state adults who had premarital counseling:		33%
Strength of Washington state marriages:	70% (9-10)	1%(1-3)
Average strength of Washington state marriages:	9.0	

Summary of Marriage Confidence Indicators

	Agree	Disagree
“Marriage is an old fashioned, outmoded institution.”	11%	88%
“Marriage should be considered a promise 'til death do us part.”	64%	32%
“I expect to be married for life.”	94%	3%
“I had optimistic expectations entering marriage.”	90%	7%
“... optimistic with little clue what marriage was going to be like.”	24%	
“... optimistic with a fairly good clue what marriage would be like.”	66%	
“All things being equal, it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father.”	86%	12%

*Figures may not add up to 100 percent due to respondents not answering or selecting neutral answers.

FPO

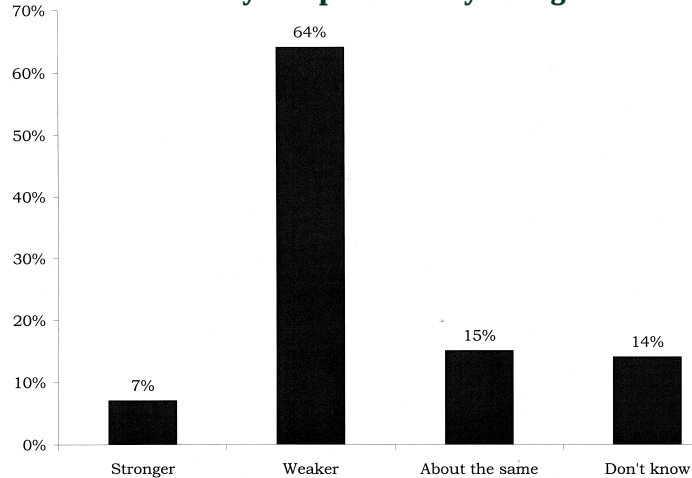
The Environment for Marriage



What does marriage look like in Washington today?

Relationships do not exist in a vacuum; they impact and are impacted by the environment in which they function. Family members, peers, advertisements, religion, laws, public opinion, and economics all exert some level of influence over our attitudes and behaviors, thereby affecting the health of marriages and the confidence individuals have in this foundational institution.

The perceived quality of marriage today compared to 30 years ago



Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Washington state adults believe the typical marriage today is weaker than the typical marriage thirty years ago. This feeling was especially strong in eastern Washington where 83 percent of the adult population expressed this belief, compared to 62 percent in western Washington and 64 percent in central-southern Washington.

What has contributed to the decline in the strength of marriages?

Washington state adults were read a list of changes in society that may or may not have contributed to the weaker status of marriages today. They evaluated each change on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 meaning the change has not contributed at all to the problems in marriages today

and 10 meaning the change has contributed a great deal to marital stress. The two contributors rated most responsible for the problems in marriages today are “more permissive attitudes about sex outside of marriage” and “more permissive attitudes about divorce.” Additional analysis identifies some differences in opinion based on individual experiences.

“More permissive attitudes about sex outside of marriage:”

Women see this change having a significantly greater impact than men do (8.1-average among women, compared to a 7.2-average for men). Married men and women feel this change has had significantly more impact than do single men (7.8-average for married men and 8.1 for married women, compared to a 6.7-average for single men). Adults with children see these attitudes as a greater contributor than those without children (7.9-average for those with one child and an 8.0-average for adults with two to three children, compared to a 7.0-average for adults with no children).

“More permissive attitudes about divorce:”



Women give this factor a higher average ranking than men do (a 7.9-average for women; a 7.3-average for men). Adults with children also rate this change higher on average than those without children (average range of 7.7-8.3, depending on the number of children, which is significantly higher than the 6.9-average rating of those without children). Individuals who have been married six to 10 years consider this change to have greater influence on marital strength than those who have been married less than six years (8.7-average for people married six to 10 years, compared to 7.3 for those married less than six years).

“Greater time pressures on parents:”

Women feel this is a more significant change than men do (women averaged 7.6, while men averaged 7.1). Not surprisingly, those with children also rate this factor higher on average than those without children (a 7.8-average for those with one child and 7.5 for those with two to three children, compared to 7.0 for those without children).

“Greater economic and financial pressures:”

Individuals who do not have education beyond high school rated this change as having a higher impact than those with a college degree did (7.7-average for high-school grads, compared to an average of 7.1 for college grads). Those who have ever been divorced or widowed also rate this change significantly higher than those who have not (a 7.7-average

for those ever divorced or widowed, compared to a 7.2 among those not divorced or widowed).

“Decline in religious faith and attendance:”

Individuals who participated in premarital counseling give this factor a significantly higher rating than those who did not have premarital counseling (a 7.0-average among those who had counseling, compared to a 6.4 for those who did not). Washingtonians who participate in religious activities and profess faith feel more strongly that this change has contributed to the problems in marriage than those who are not involved with the church (supported by significantly higher ratings among those who claim a Christian affiliation, identify themselves as “born again,” pray with their spouse, and attend church services regularly).

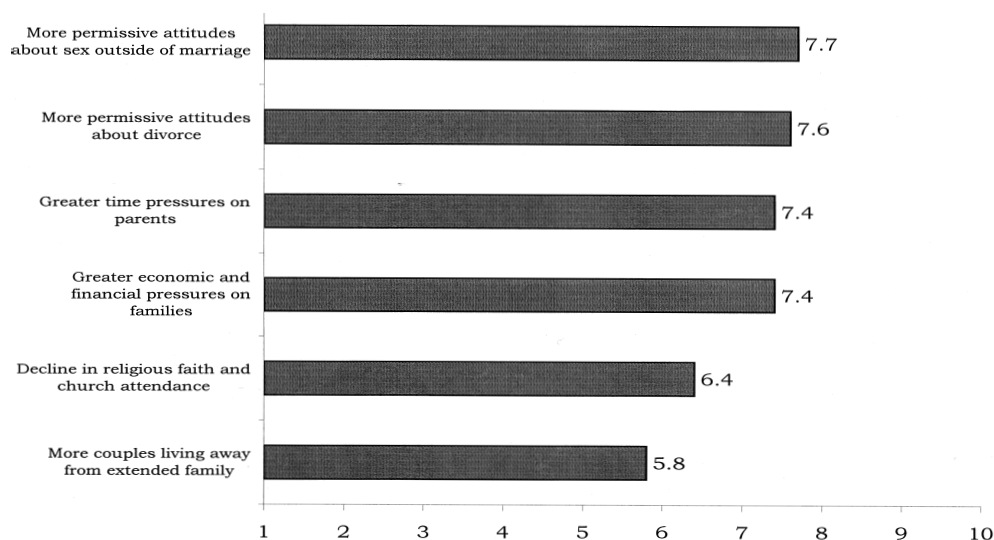
“More people living away from extended family:”

Individuals who are currently divorced or separated evaluated this change as a greater contributor than those who are currently married or cohabiting (6.6-average for separated/divorced individuals, compared to an average of 5.7 for married adults, and 5.5 for cohabiting/engaged adults).

Key finding:

More permissive attitudes about divorce and sex outside of marriage are seen as the two most significant contributors to the decline in the strength of marriage.

To what extent have these changes contributed to the problems in marriage?

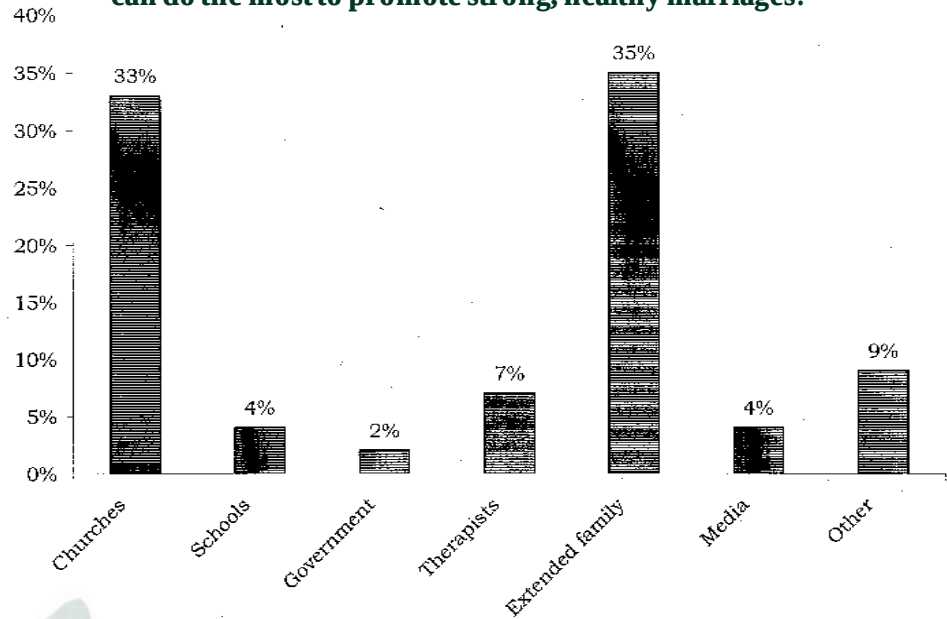


How will marriage get stronger?

Just as the environment for marriage has contributed in some ways to its weakness, it can also contribute to its strength. By recognizing the institutions that influence people in marriage, and understanding the charact-

eristics that contribute to strong marriage relationships, we can work to foster an environment where marriages thrive ... from this day forward.

Besides married couples themselves, which of these can do the most to promote strong, healthy marriages?



Churches and extended family are clearly where individuals look to find support for building and sustaining strong marriages. Women are more likely to turn to churches for help in building strong, healthy marriages (40% of women, compared to 26% of men), while men are more likely to look to their extended family for help (42% of men, compared to 30% of women).

People who are currently divorced said that government could promote strong marriages at a significantly higher rate than did either married or single individuals (9% of divorced, 1% of married, and none of the single respondents). In fact, half of those who selected government are currently divorced. This could be an indication of the experience these individuals had with government during their divorce.

Key finding:
Washington state adults believe lifelong commitment, good communication, and fidelity are the factors most important to building strong marriages.

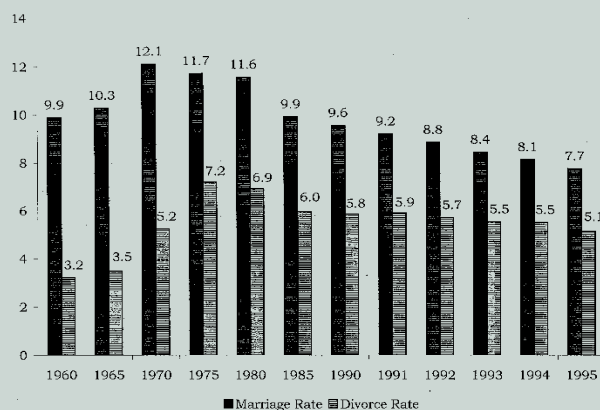
Washingtonians were asked to rate each of nine characteristics on a scale of 1 to 10 on its importance to having a strong marriage. Based on the average rating and the percentage of people who gave a characteristic a 9 or 10, these factors can be grouped in four levels of importance. More than three-quarters of Washington state adults rated “lifelong commitment,” “good communication,” and “fidelity” (80%, 79%, and 76% respectively) of highest importance (9 or 10) to a strong marriage. The next tier includes “close friendship” (70% rated it a 9 or 10) and “ability to resolve conflict” (67% rated it a 9 or 10) as essential to a strong marriage. These five characteristics had even higher average ratings (9.5 to 9.2) among individuals who evaluated the strength of their own marriage as a 10 on a 10-point scale.

The third tier of characteristics—“shared interests and goals,” “strong religious faith,” and “sexual satisfaction”—important to a strong marriage all received a 9- or 10-rating from about one-third of the population (33%, 32%, and 29% respectively). Despite its slightly lower average rating, “strong religious faith” received a 9 or 10 rating from about 50 percent more people than the fourth tier charac-

teristic—“financial security” (22% rated it a 9 or 10).

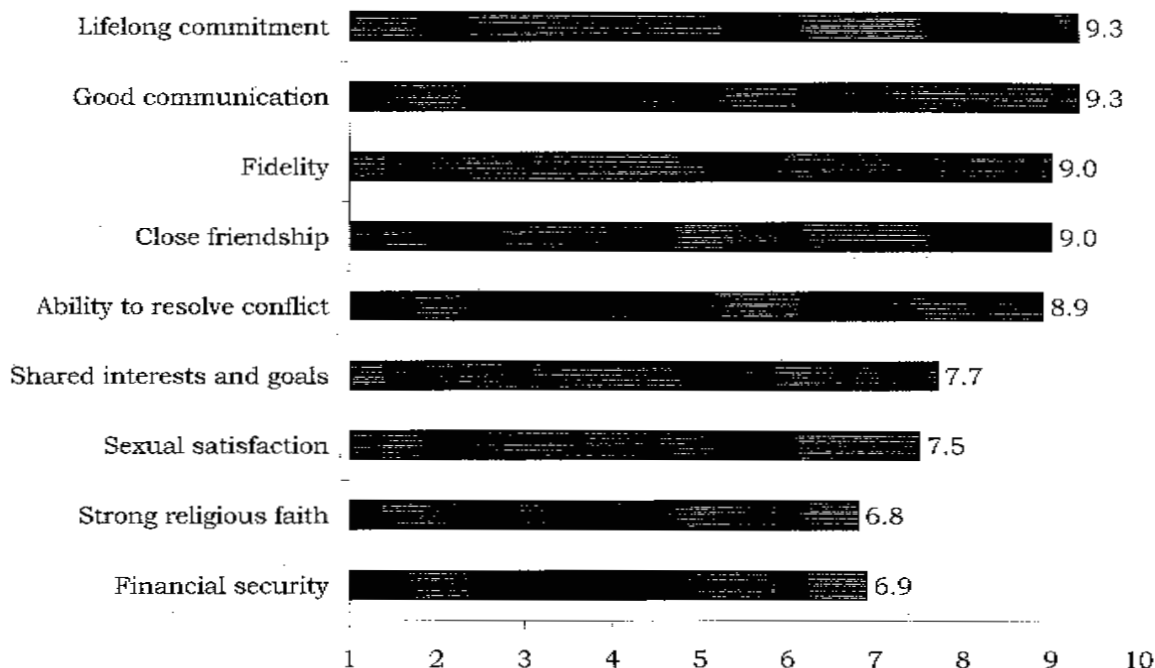
Further statistical tests show that five of these characteristics—lifelong commitment, good communication, fidelity, strong religious faith, and sexual satisfaction—are key predictors of how Washington adults will rate the strength of their own marriages.

Marriage and divorce rates in Washington state
(rates are # of people per 1,000 getting married or divorced in that year)



Marriage and divorce rates tell us the number of marriages and divorces that take place in a given year relative to the total population of the state. Therefore, the often repeated statistic that “half of all marriages end in divorce” is not an established fact; it is a prediction about the future of recently married couples should the divorce rate continue on its current path. *Graph Source: Washington State Data Book*

How important are these factors to a strong marriage?



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The Marriage Health Indicators are five key statistics that will be measured and tracked annually. The prevalence of these five behavioral indicators will give a snapshot of people's behavior relative to marriage in Washington state.

- 1 Percentage of Washington state adults who have ever been married and are currently married.*
- 2 Percentage of Washington state adults who have ever been divorced and are currently divorced.*
- 3 Percentage of Washington state adults who have ever cohabited and are currently cohabiting.*
- 4 Percentage of Washington state adults who received premarital counseling before they married.*
- 5 Percentage of Washington state adults who evaluate their marriage as strong, percentage who evaluate their marriage as weak, and the average strength of marriages.*

Marriage Health Indicators

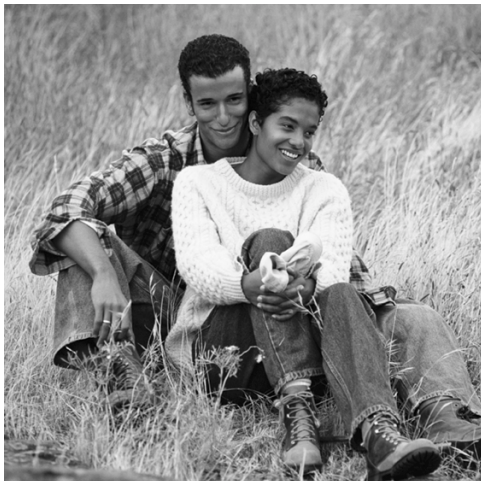


Where do we start?

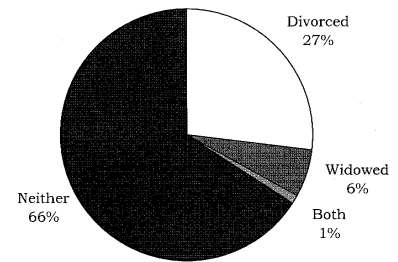
Examining various marriage health indicators paints a picture of the relationship history of individuals in Washington state. To move from this day forward to one where marriages are stronger, we have to know where we are today. The majority of Washington state adults are currently married (57%), and more than three-quarters (79%) have been married at some time.

While only 9 percent are currently divorced, about one in four (27%) have been divorced at some time. In addition to those who have personally experienced divorce, many Washington state adults have been impacted by their parents' divorce. Overall, one in four (28%) adults said their parents had divorced, and 26 percent of adults who have not divorced themselves have had parents who divorced.

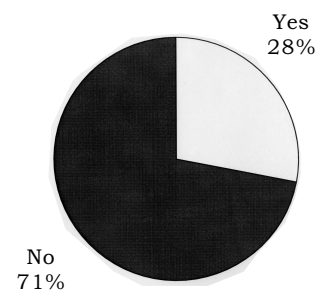
Looking back, two-thirds (67%) of adults who are currently divorced wished they had worked harder to save their marriage. Just less than half (42%) of all adults who have ever been divorced or widowed are currently married, and they are getting an opportunity to learn from actions not taken in the past to improve the health of their current marriages.



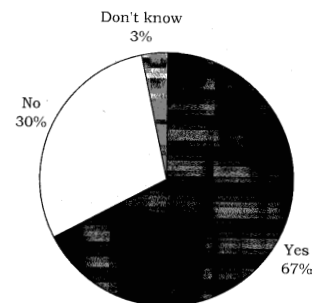
Have you ever been divorced or widowed?



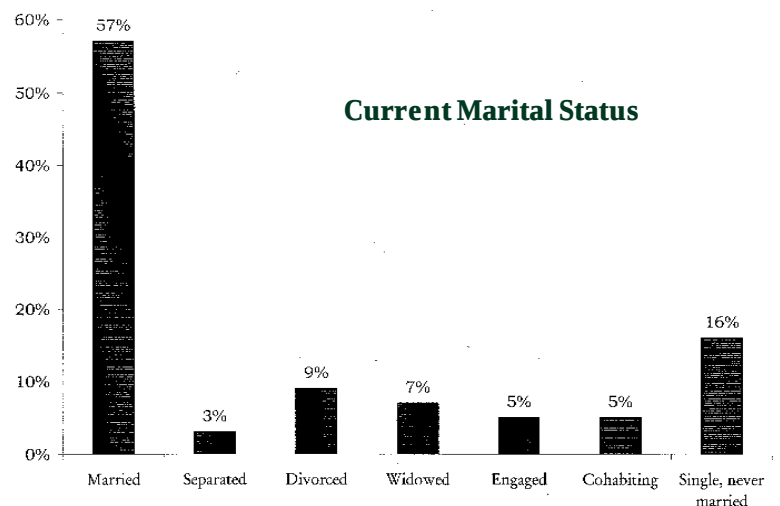
Did your parents divorce?

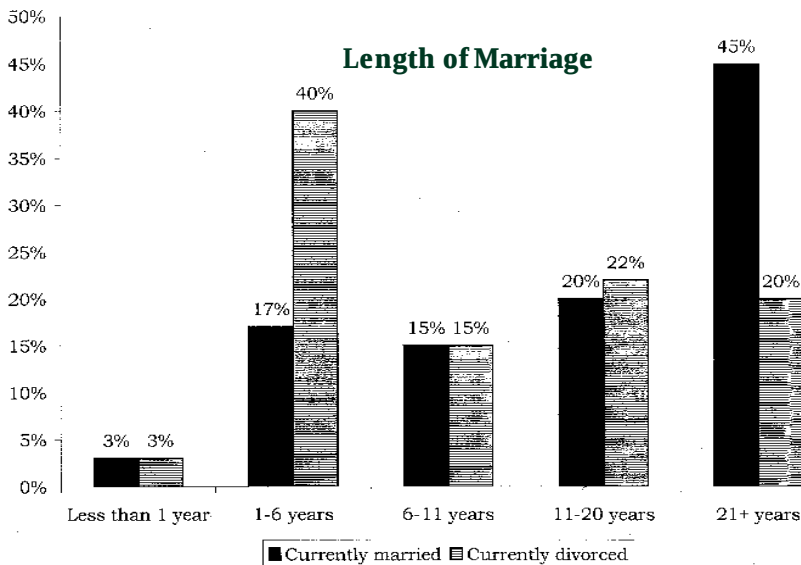


Looking back, do you wish you and your ex-spouse had tried harder to work through your differences?



Current Marital Status





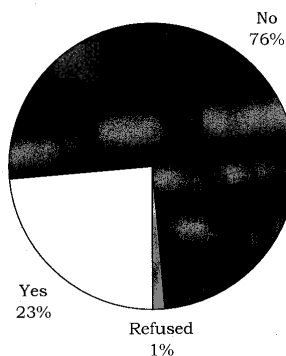
Key finding:

Most divorces occur after one to six years of marriage, and individuals who have been married one to six years are more likely to rate the strength of their own marriages weaker than those who have been married longer.

While it is understandable that marriages ending in divorce do not last as long as marriages not ended by divorce, it is interesting to compare the lifespan of the two relationships. A substantial majority of intact marriages in Washington state are more than 10 years old (65%). However, about one-third fewer marriages that ended in divorce lasted as long as 10 years (42%). Almost half of all marriages (45%) in Washington have celebrated twentieth anniversaries,

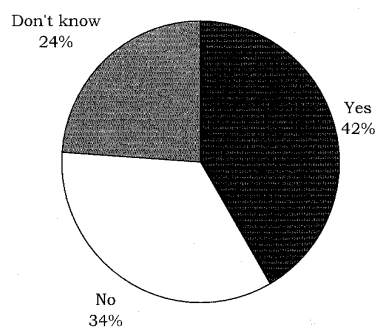
yet four-fifths (80%) of all marriages ending in divorce do not last that long. Marriages ending in divorce seem to end most frequently in the one-to-six-year range, and Washington state adults who have been married one to six years are more likely to rate the strength of their own marriage in the 6-8 range than to rate their marriage as a 9 or 10.

Have you ever cohabited?



About one in four (23%) Washington state adults has lived with a significant other without being married at some point in their relationship history. Currently, though, only 5 percent describe their marital status as "living with a significant other." Adults who are separated or divorced are more likely to have cohabited than those who are currently married (38% of currently separated or divorced, compared to 14% of currently

Do you plan to marry your significant other?



married), as are adults who have been married less than 10 years (about 25% of those married less than 10 years, compared to 8% of those married more than 10 years). Washingtonians who have cohabited are more likely to rate the strength of their current relationship lower, while adults who have not cohabited are more likely to rate the strength of their current relationship higher.

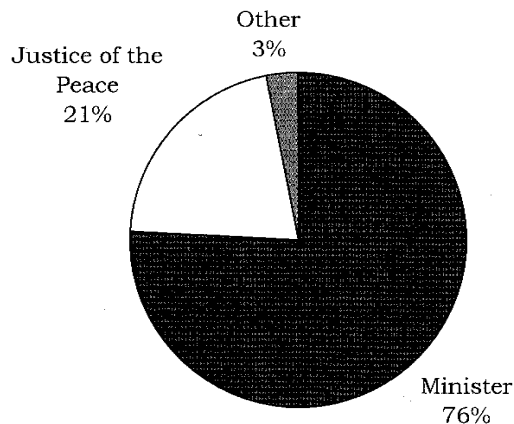
Does preparation help?

From this day forward...

So often the wedding day is thought of as the first day of the marriage relationship when in fact a foundation on which that relationship is built was actually laid long before the walk down the aisle. With the average cost of a wedding approaching the price of a new car, and those new cars lasting longer than some marriages, are we as a society spending more time and energy planning for our weddings than we are planning and preparing for our marriages?

Just more than three-quarters (77%) of all marriages have been officiated by a minister or rabbi among Washington state adults.

**Who officiated your wedding?
(currently married)**

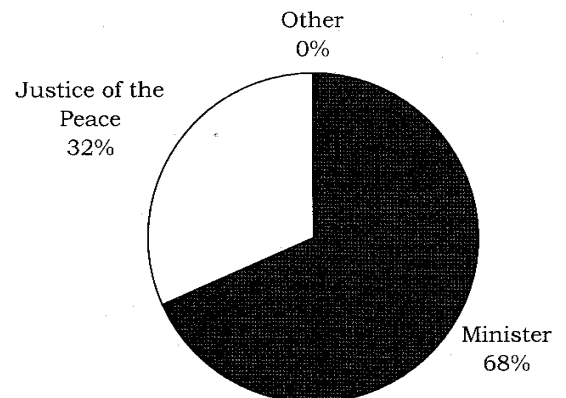


Interestingly, a justice of the peace married a greater percentage of individuals currently divorced than of those currently married.

While a wedding is typically thought to involve two individuals, and not three, the selection of the third person—the officiant—has a significant impact on several aspects of married life.

←A far greater percentage of those married by a minister have had premarital counseling than those married by a justice of the peace (46% of those married by a minister, 8% of those married by a JOP).

**Who officiated your wedding?
(currently divorced)**



Key finding:
Since three quarters of marriages are officiated by ministers or rabbis, they are in a key position to increase participation in premarital counseling—which most adults say is helpful to their marriage.

←Individuals married by a minister are more likely to have been married more than 10 years (81% of those married 11+ years, compared to 60% of those married less than six years). Individuals married by a justice of the peace are more likely to have been married less than six years (33% of those married less than six years, compared to 19% of those married more than 10 years). This could indicate a trend toward justices of the peace officiating more weddings in recent years.

←Washington state adults married by a minister are more likely to rate the strength of their marriage a 9 or 10 than to rate it lower

(81% of adults giving their relationships a 9-10 rating, compared to 67% of those giving lower ratings). Adults married by a justice of the peace are more likely to give their marriage a 6-8 rating than to rate its strength a 9-10 (33% of 6-8 range, compared to 16% of 9-10 range).

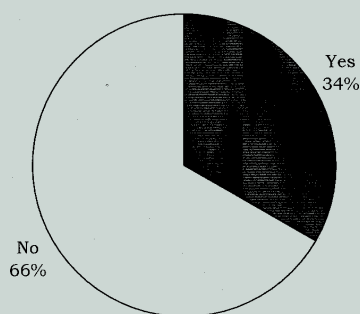
Only one-third of Washingtonians who have been or are married participated in premarital counseling, but 80 percent of those who did participate found the counseling helpful to the success of their marriage. Among those who did have premarital counseling, they attended an average number of 3.6 sessions. Participation in premarital counseling makes a difference in other behaviors and beliefs as well. For example:

←Those who participated in premarital counseling gave higher importance to the “ability to resolve conflict” as a necessary characteristic for a strong marriage (9.2, compared to 8.8). Since premarital counseling often includes teaching on effective conflict-resolution skills, those who have participated may also be better at resolving conflict in addition to being more sensitive to its impact on marriage.

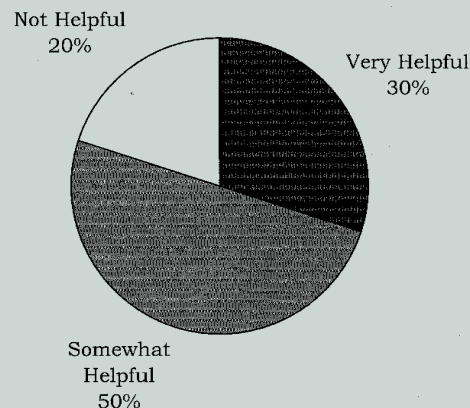
←Marriage is a more relevant and significant relationship to those who have had counseling. Significantly more people strongly disagreed with the statement “marriage is an old fashioned, outmoded institution,” if they had premarital counseling than if they did not (83% of those who had counseling strongly disagree, compared to 69% of those with no counseling).

←People who participated in premarital counseling are more likely to see divorce as bringing its own set of problems, while those who did not participate in counseling are more likely to see divorce as a positive step to a

Did you attend premarital counseling?



How helpful was the premarital counseling?



better life. Eighty-five percent of those who had counseling think divorce “trades one set of problems for another,” while only 67 percent of those without counseling agree with this belief. Twenty-three percent of those who did not have premarital counseling believe “divorce is a springboard to a better life,” while only 9 percent of those who had counseling agree with this belief.

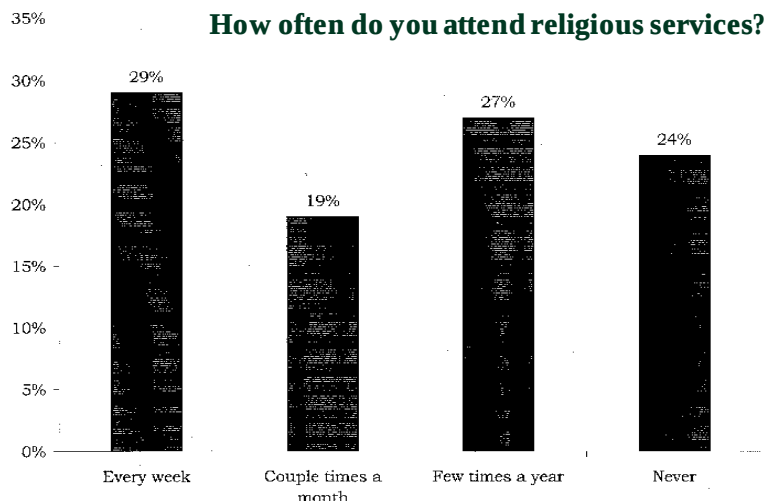
←Individuals who participated in counseling place more importance in working through hard times in marriage, while non-counseled individuals are quicker to consider divorce. (Ninety-six percent of individuals with counseling said an unhappy couple should work to make their marriage better, while only 75% of those without counseling agreed; 18% of couples without counseling believe an unhappy couple should get a divorce, compared to 4% of counseled individuals.)



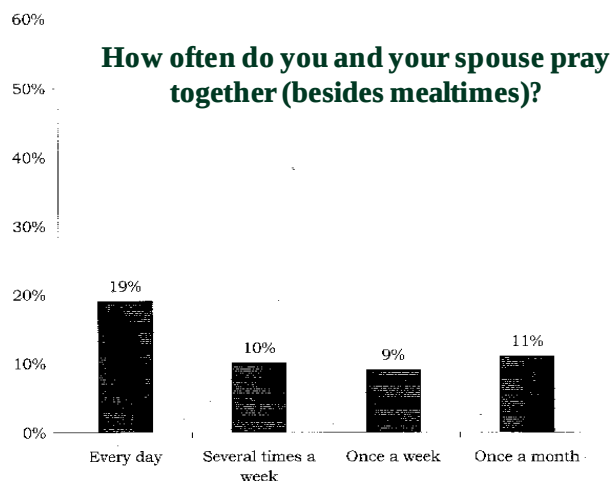
Does religion make a difference?

Church attendance

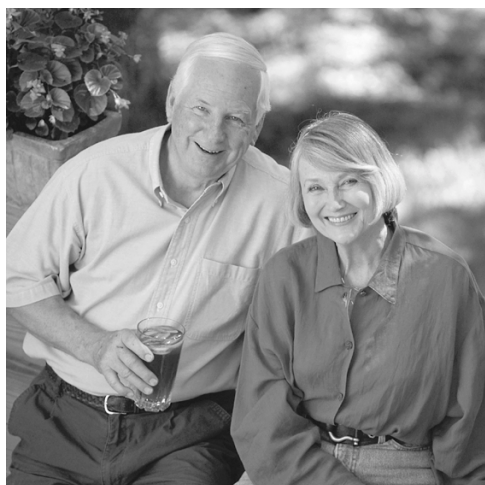
Nearly three-quarters (73%) of Washingtonians affiliate themselves with a Christian church, and just under half (48%) of those individuals consider themselves “born again.” About half of Washington adults (48%) attend religious services regularly. In contrast, one-quarter (24%) of adults report “never” attending religious services (see graph to right).



←Those who are married are more likely to attend religious services every week than those who are separated/divorced, or engaged/cohabiting (35% of married, compared to 13% and 18% of other groups). Married women are particularly more likely to attend services weekly (41% of married women, compared to 27% of married men and 20% of single men).



←Adults with children are more likely to attend religious services weekly than those without children (33% of those with children, compared to 20% of those with no children).



←Individuals who attend religious services weekly are more likely to rate the strength of their own marriage as a 9 or 10 than to rate it lower (35% who give a 9-10 rating attend weekly, compared to 21% of those who rate lower).

Praying together

The belief that “the couple that prays together stays together” is supported by these research findings. While less than half of all married couples pray together at all, and only 29 percent pray together frequently (19% report “every day” and 10% report “several times a week”), this prayer time has a significant impact on a couple’s marriage.

←Two-thirds (66%) of couples who have seriously considered divorce report never praying with their spouse, while less than half (45%) of couples who have not considered divorce never pray with their spouse.

←Couples who pray together regularly are

more likely to say they would marry the same person again, while couples who never pray together are more likely to say they would not marry the same person again (75% of those who would not marry the same person, compared to 46% of those who would marry the same person, report never praying with their spouse).

←Praying together also seems to have an impact on the perceived strength of a relationship. Nearly one-quarter (23%) of those rating their marriage a 9 or 10 pray together daily, while only 12 percent of those who rate their marriage from six to eight pray together daily. On the other hand, 55 percent of who rate their marriage a 6-8 never pray together.

Conflict and marriage

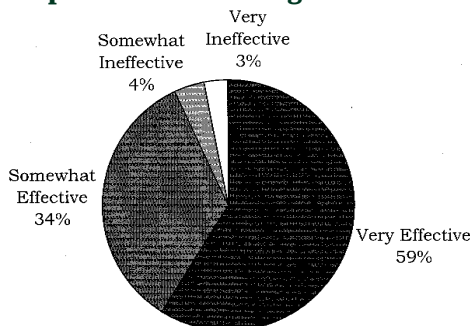
While conflict is not an enjoyable part of most relationships, it does seem to be a common factor in almost all adult relationships in Washington (7% report never quarreling with their partner). The most common frequency of relationship conflict is one to two “quarrels” per month (42%). Interestingly, additional statistical analysis shows very few differences in frequency of conflict based on an individual's other beliefs or behaviors. The strength and quality of relationships, therefore, is not linked to or identified by the avoidance of conflict, but by the effective resolution of conflict.

More than 90 percent of Washington adults believe they are effective at resolving the conflict in their relationships (see pie chart above). There are several significant indicators of how effective an individual feels they are at resolving relationship conflict.

←Individuals married by a minister are more likely to report effective conflict resolution (93% of those married by a minister, compared to 84% of those married by a JOP), and more likely to report “very effective” conflict resolution (61% of those married by a minister, compared to 42% married by a JOP).

←Couples who pray together with some frequency and those who attend religious services every or almost every week are more likely to say they are effective at resolving

How effective are you and your partner at resolving conflict?

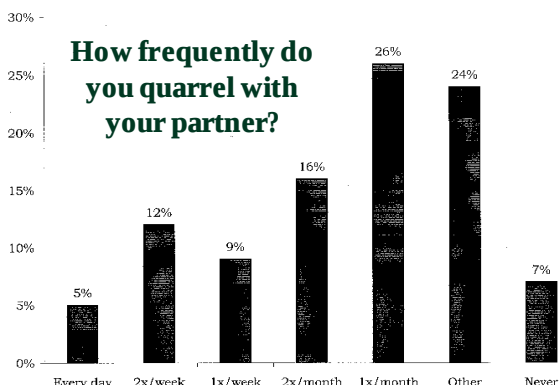


conflict. Seventy percent of those who pray together frequently say they are very effective at conflict resolution, compared to 50 percent of those who never pray together.

←Those who never pray together and never attend religious services are more likely to say they are ineffective at conflict resolution. Thirteen percent of those who never pray together and 10 percent of those who never attend religious services say they are “ineffective” at conflict resolution, compared to only 1 percent of those who pray together or attend church frequently.

←Individuals who have not cohabited outside of marriage are more likely to report effective conflict resolution (96% of those who have not cohabited, compared to 84% of those who have cohabited). Individuals who have cohabited are more likely to say they are ineffective at resolving conflict (22% of cohabitators say “ineffective,” compared to 5% of non-cohabitators).

←None of those adults who claim they are ineffective at conflict resolution rate the strength of their relationship as a 10.



Key finding:

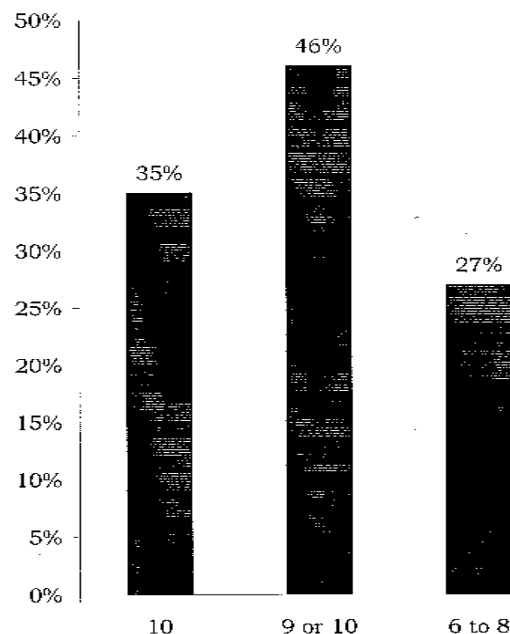
Married couples who attend church together and pray together with some regularity report more effective conflict resolution.

What's sex got to do with it?

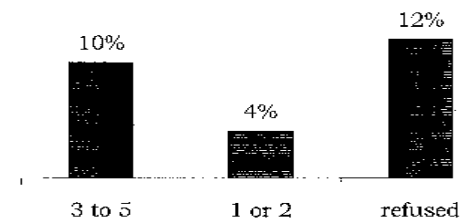
Sexual messages are pervasive in today's society. "Sex" sells everything from food to cars to clothing. "Sex" should actually sell marriage. Almost one-third (29%) of Washington adults said "sexual satisfaction" was a most important characteristic of a strong marriage. And "more permissive attitudes about sex outside of marriage" rated highest in a list of factors that have contributed to the problems with marriage. In Washington, the average evaluation of an individual's sexual satisfaction is 7.9 on a 10-point scale.

Nearly half (46%) of Washington state adults are completely satisfied with their sex lives. In fact, just more than one-third (35%) rate their sexual satisfaction as a perfect "10." Seven out of 10 adults rate their sexual satisfaction as a seven or higher. An individual's sexual satisfaction rating is related to many other beliefs and behaviors.

←Young married individuals (18-34) and those married less than six years have significantly higher average sexual-satisfaction ratings than



Sexual Satisfaction



Key finding:
Lifelong commitment, good communication, fidelity, strong religious faith, and sexual satisfaction are key influences in how an individual rates the strength of his or her own marriage.

their older or longer-married counterparts. (Young married average satisfaction is 9.0, compared to married 35-49 and married 50+ year-olds average of 7.9; those married less than six years average 9.0, while those married 11+ years average 7.8.)

←Those who were married by a minister or rabbi have a significantly higher sexual-satisfaction average than those married by a justice of the peace (8.2, compared to 7.4).

←Individuals who pray regularly with their spouse (every day or several times per week) have a significantly higher sexual-satisfaction average than those who never pray with their spouse (9.0, compared to 7.7).

←Those who rate their sexual satisfaction as a 9 or 10 are more likely to not have considered divorce and more likely to say they would marry the same person over again if they had the chance (54% of those who haven't considered divorce rate their sexual satisfaction a 9 or 10, compared to 36% of those who have considered divorce; 51% of those who would marry the same person said their sexual satisfaction is a 9 or 10, compared to 25% of those who would not marry the same person).

Strength of marriages and other relationships

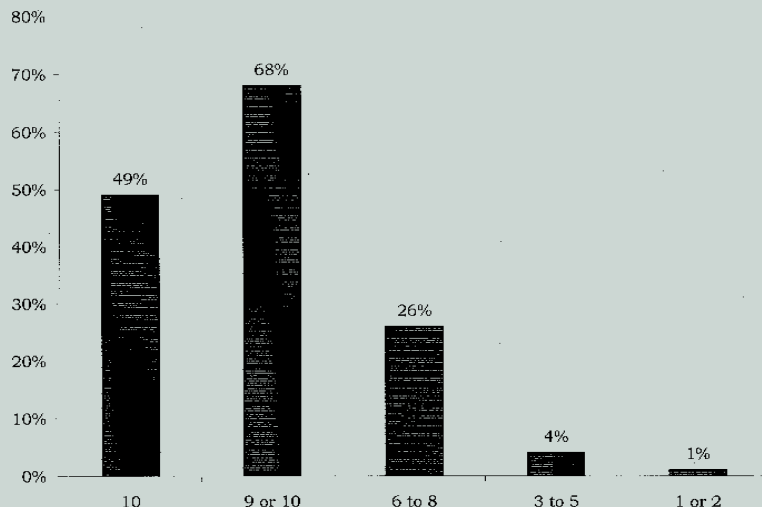
Washington state adults are in relationships that have an average strength of 8.9 on a scale of 1 to 10. Just about half (49%) of all adults evaluate their relationships as a "10"—not claiming that they are perfect but that they are very strong. Some noteworthy differences in the strength of relationships was found based on the type of relationship being rated.

←Those over age 65 were more likely to rate the strength of their relationship as a 9 or 10 (79% of those over 65) than were people ages 35-49 (59% rated their relationship as a 9-10).

←Married individuals are significantly more likely to rate their relationship strength as a "10" than individuals who are engaged or living with a significant other (53% of marrieds, compared to 34% of engaged/cohabiting).

←Being married by a minister or rabbi, as opposed to a justice of the peace, predicts a higher likelihood of rating your marriage as a

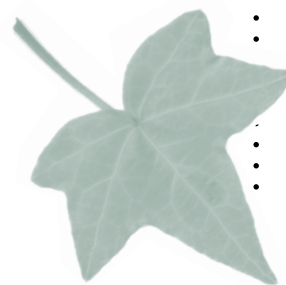
How would you rate the strength of your own marriage/relationship?



9 or 10 (72% of those married by a minister, compared to 51% married by a JOP). The average rating given by those married by a minister is 9.0, compared to an average 8.3 from those married by a JOP.

←Washington state adults who pray with their spouse or attend religious services frequently evaluated their relationships stronger, on average, than those who never prayed with their spouse or attended religious services sporadically. (Couples who pray together had an average strength of 9.3, while couples who never pray together averaged at 8.6; frequent church attenders had an average 9.2 compared to rare attenders' 8.6-average.)

←Those individuals who have never cohabited outside of marriage were more likely to rate their relationships stronger (9-10) than those who have cohabited (71% of non-cohabitators rated their relationship a 9-10, compared to 53% of those who have cohabited).



FPO

The Marriage Confidence Indicators are five key attitudes that will be measured and tracked annually. The prevalence of these five attitudinal indicators will give a snapshot of people's beliefs relative to marriage in Washington state.

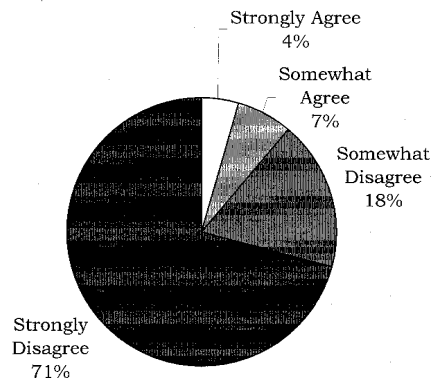
- 1 Percentage of Washington state adults who disagree with the statement, "Marriage is an old fashioned, outmoded institution."*
- 2 Percentage of Washington state adults who agree more with the belief that "marriage should be considered a promise 'til death do us part," rather than only "as long as love may last."*
- 3 Percentage of Washington state adults who expect to be married for life.*
- 4 Percentage of Washington state adults who report optimistic expectations upon entering marriage. These expectations will be broken down into those who were "optimistic, with little clue of what marriage was going to be like," compared to those who were "optimistic, with a fairly good clue about what marriage was going to be like."*
- 5 Percentage of Washington state adults who agree that "all things being equal, it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father."*

Marriage Confidence Indicators

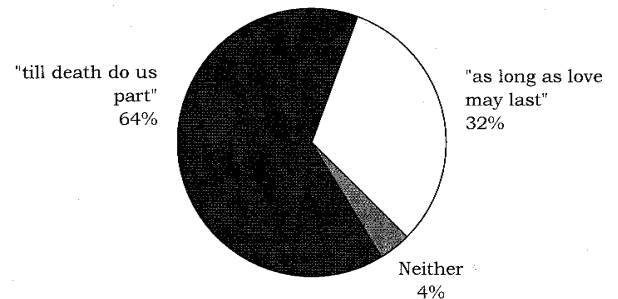


From this day forward ... is that realistic?

**"Marriage is an old fashioned,
outmoded institution."**



**"Marriage should be considered
a promise to remain together ..."**



Is marriage forever?

The vast majority (88%) of Washingtonians disagreed with the notion that the institution of marriage is old fashioned and out-of-date. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of adults believe that marriage is an absolute commitment ("til death do us part"), while just under one-third (32%) believe it is only a conditional commitment ("as long as love may last").

←Women expressed a stronger belief in the institution of marriage, with a 92-percent disagreement, than did men with 84 percent disagreeing with the idea that marriage is old fashioned.

←If experience gives credibility to opinion, marriage has even stronger support. Washingtonians who are currently married are significantly more likely to support the institution of marriage than those of any other marital status (93% of married people disagree, compared to 85% of singles, 80% of separated/divorced, and 77% of the engaged/cohabiting). The

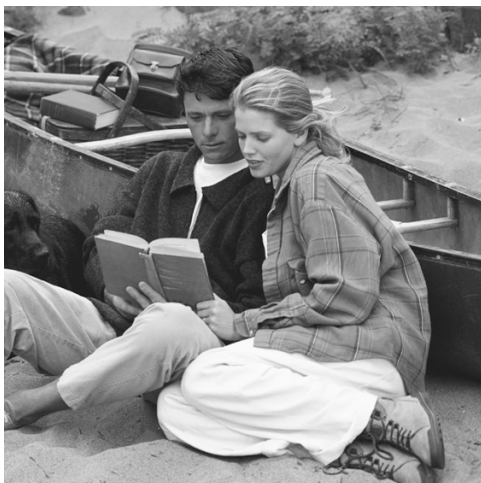
"single-never-married" population is significantly more supportive of the institution of marriage than those living with a significant other.

←Among married adults, younger married people are more likely to view marriage as an absolute commitment than older married people (81% of 18-34-year-old marrieds said marriage was a promise "til death do us part," compared to 62% of 35-49-year-old marrieds).

←Those married by a minister are more likely to see marriage as a promise "til death do us part" than those married by a justice of the peace (71%, compared to 33%).

←Individuals who have never cohabited outside of marriage are more likely to see marriage as an absolute commitment than those who have cohabited (69% of never-cohabitators said marriage is "til death do us part," compared to 53% of those who have cohabited).

←The example set by parents impacts people's beliefs about the level of commitment in marriage. Washington state adults whose parents did not divorce are more likely to see marriage as a lifelong commitment when compared to those whose parents did divorce (68%, compared to 55%).



How long can it last?

Moving from beliefs about marriage as an institution to measurements of the health of individual marriages, Washington state adults responded to two questions about their personal relationships. More than four-fifths (82%) of all adults who have ever been married said they would marry the same person if they had it to do over again. This speaks to the level of satisfaction and contentment individuals are experiencing in their relationships. Almost all individuals (94%), whether married or not-yet married, expressed an expectation to be married for life.

← Individuals who have never cohabited are more likely to say they would marry the same person again than those who have cohabited (86%, compared to 62%).

← Whether or not a person's parents had divorced also impacted their satisfaction with their current spouse. More people whose parents did not divorce said they would marry the same person again than did those whose parents did divorce (86%, compared to 73%).

Washington state adults were asked to recall their expectations when they entered marriage. Ninety percent remember

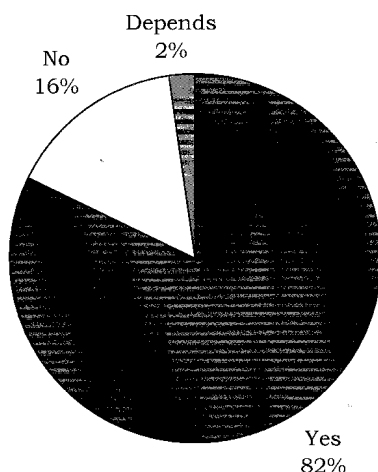
being optimistic about their marriage, while six percent were pessimistic about the future. Two-thirds (66%) of those asked said they were "optimistic, with a fairly good clue about what marriage was going to be like," while another quarter (24%) reported being "optimistic, with little clue about what marriage was going to be like."

Participation in premarital counseling has a significant impact on an individual's expectations entering marriage. Those who report having gone through premarital counseling are more likely to remember being optimistic than those who did not have counseling (94%, compared to 86%). Expectations may also be a predictor or contributor to marital success, as those who are currently married are more likely to report having optimistic expectations when entering marriage than those who are currently divorced (93% of married adults said they were optimistic, compared to only 79% of currently divorced adults).

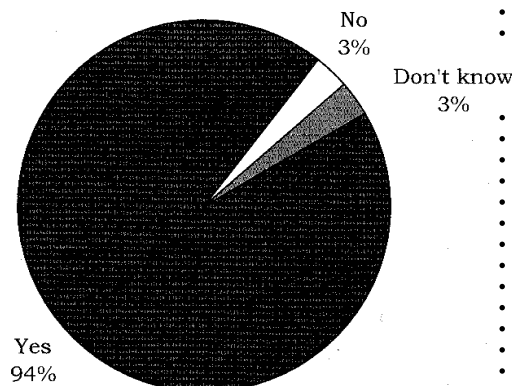
Key finding:

The majority of Washingtonians believe marriage is a relevant institution and a lifelong commitment. Younger adults, especially, look forward to a lifelong marriage.

Would you marry the same person if you had it to do over again?



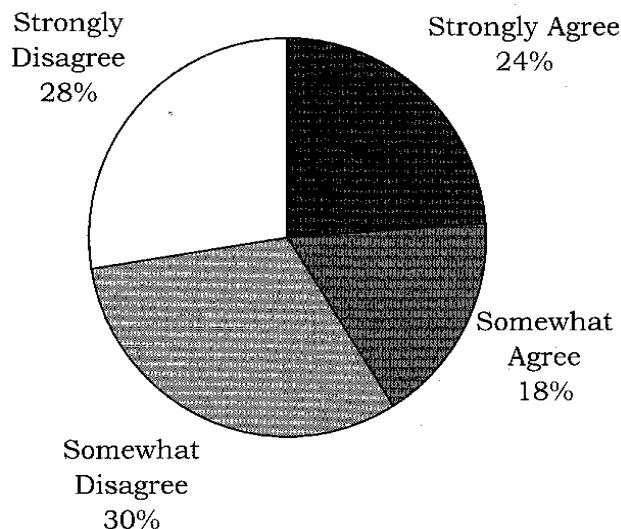
Do you expect to be married for life?



Is marriage worth the wait?

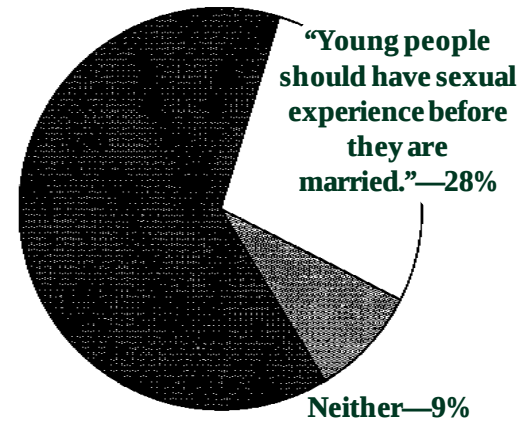
Is marriage something that can be “practiced,” or is marriage without the “I do” really marriage at all? Washington state adults identify “lifelong commitment” and “fidelity” as two of the most important factors in a strong marriage. How does that fit with the beliefs expressed below?

“It is a bad idea for couples to live together before they are married.”



Just more than half (60%) of Washington state adults disagreed with the belief that “it is a bad idea for couples to live together before marriage,” while 40 percent agreed with this assertion. While half of the people were strong in their agreement or disagreement with this idea, almost one-third (30%) only disagreed “somewhat.” The differences between those who agreed and those who disagreed provide additional information that

“Couples should wait to have sex until they are married.”—63%



may sway some of the “somewhats” in their opinions.

←Washington state’s married adults are more likely to agree with this statement than those who are currently living with a significant other or are engaged (45% of married people agree, compared to 25% of cohabiting and engaged people).

←Married women and women with children who are not employed are more likely to agree with this statement than wives and mothers who work full time (52% of non-employed wives/moms, compared to 35% of full-time employed wives/moms).

←Those who have been married longer than 11 years are more likely to agree that cohabiting is a bad idea than those who have been married less than six years (48% agree, compared to 31%).

←Couples who were married by a minister or rabbi are more likely to agree than those

Key finding:
The experience of marriage gives people a different perspective on premarital sexual involvement; married people are more likely to believe that sex and living together should be saved for marriage.

married by a justice of the peace (48% agree, compared to 29%).

←People who attended premarital counseling are more likely to agree than those who did not have premarital counseling (51% agree, compared to 39%).

When asked which statement was closer to their personal beliefs, about two-thirds (63%) of adults said they believe “couples should wait to have sex until they are married,” while just more than one-quarter (28%) said “young people should have sexual experience before they are married.” While this result seems contrary to beliefs about living together, it could be that people are stating a personal belief in this case, where before they were thinking about what was right or wrong for the general public.

←Women were significantly more likely than men to say that people should save sex for marriage (71% of women, compared to 55% of men).

←Individuals who are currently married are more likely to believe that sex should wait until marriage than those who are currently divorced or single and never married (68% of married adults, compared to 53% among both divorced and single adults).

←Those with children are more likely to say couples should wait than are those without children (about 67% of those with children, compared to 54% of those without).

←Interestingly, people from eastern Washington are more likely to believe people should wait until marriage to have sex than are those from western Washington (77% of those in the greater Spokane area and 71% of those in the greater Yakima/Tri-Cities area, compared to 53% of King County residents and 59% of residents in the Puget Sound area).

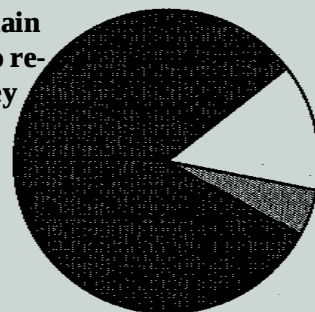
The message from the vast majority of Washingtonians is that marriage is worth preserving, even when it takes some work. More than four out of every five people (81%) say that a couple unhappy in their marriage should “remain together and work to re-establish the love they once felt,” while only 14 percent said that same unhappy couple should “get a divorce.”

Is it worth the effort?

“A couple who is unhappy in their marriage should remain together and work to re-establish the love they once felt.”—81%

“A couple who is unhappy in their marriage should get a divorce.”—14%

Neither—5%



lish the love they once felt,” while only 14 percent said that same unhappy couple should “get a divorce.”

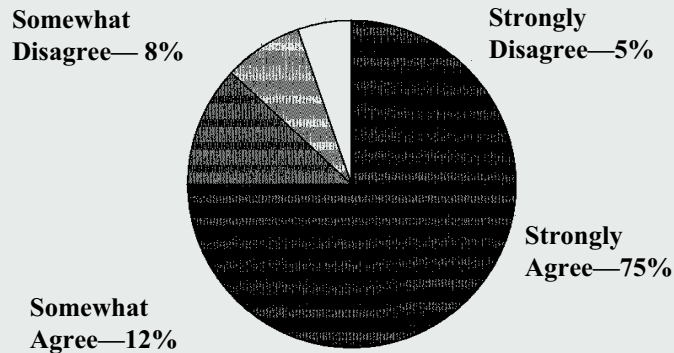
←Ethnic minorities were more likely to believe that unhappy couples should work to make their relationships better than those who identified themselves as Caucasian (93% of minorities, compared to 80% of Caucasians).

←Premarital counseling impacts a person’s belief about working to make a marriage better (96% of those who had counseling said an unhappy couple should work on their marriage, compared to 75% of those who did not have counseling).

←Religious behavior also has significant relationship to an individual’s response about an unhappy marriage. Those who report praying together with their spouse are more likely than those who never pray together to believe that a couple should work on a marriage and not just divorce (95% of those who pray together, compared to 77% who never pray together). People who never or seldom attend church are significantly more likely to say an unhappy couple should get a divorce than those who attend church regularly (23% of those who never attend and 18% of those who rarely attend selected “get a divorce,” compared to only 3% of those who attend regularly).

How does marriage impact children?

“All things being equal, it is better for children to be raised by their married mother and father.”



Marriage and children

Washington state adults agree with social-science research, for the most part, in the belief that children are better off when they are raised by a married mother and father. Nearly three-quarters of Washington state adults strongly agreed with such a belief, and a total of 87 percent agreed to some extent. Logically, a higher percentage of parents agreed with this statement than did people without children, yet 80 percent of people without children still agreed with this idea. There was not a significant difference in the level of agreement with this belief among single parents, divorced parents, and married parents.

← Individuals over the age of 50 are more likely to strongly agree with this statement than younger respondents (87% of those over 50, compared to 67% of 18-49-year-olds).

← Married adults agreed with this statement to a greater degree than adults who are living with a significant other or who are engaged (89% of married, compared to 76% of cohabit-

ing/engaged).

← As the length of marriage increases, so does the agreement that children are better off being raised by a married mother and father. Those married longer than 11 years show significantly more agreement with this idea than those married less than six years do (92%, compared to 79%).

← The majority of adults whose parents divorced agreed with this statement (75%), but more of those whose parents did not divorce held this belief (90%).

Divorce and children

When asked whether a couple unhappy in their marriage should stay together for their children or whether they should get a divorce, Washington state adults were split in their opinions. Not quite half (48%) said that an unhappy couple should divorce, and fewer (39%) said they believe the couple should stay together for the sake of the children. With 13 percent of respondents not selecting either statement as representing their beliefs, it is difficult to draw clear conclusions from these findings.

← Men are more likely to say that a couple should stay together for the kids than women



(44% of men, compared to 35% of women).

←Individuals who are single and have never married are more likely than those who are divorced or separated to believe that the couple should stay together (48% of singles compared, to 28% of separated/divorced individuals).

←People married by a minister or rabbi, more so than those married by a justice of the peace, are likely to believe that marriage should be preserved for the children's sake (43%, compared to 26%).

←Those who have cohabited are more likely to say that an unhappy couple with children should divorce than those who have never cohabited (60%, compared to 43%).

Is divorce the way to a better life?

While there is not a clearly dominant opinion on whether or not a couple with children should seek a divorce, a substantial majority (69%) of Washington state adults believe that

people who divorce often trade one set of problems for another. Only one in five adults (21%) believe that divorce is typically a "springboard to a better life."

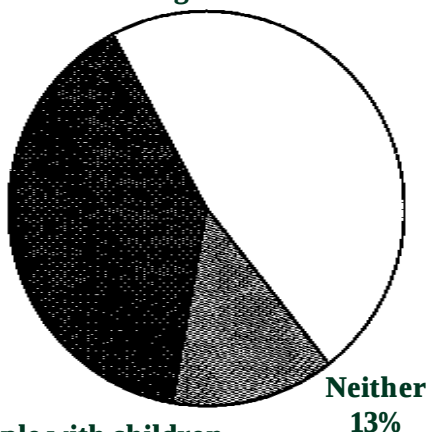
←Single-never-married adults are significantly more likely than married adults to believe that divorce typically results in a better life for those involved (35% of singles, compared to 16% of marrieds). Never having experienced divorce or marriage for themselves, this impression could be fueled by messages they receive from different societal influences.

←A majority of Washingtonians (61%) whose parents divorced believe that divorce typically trades one set of problems for another. However a higher percentage (73%) of those whose parents did not divorce hold that same belief.

Key finding:

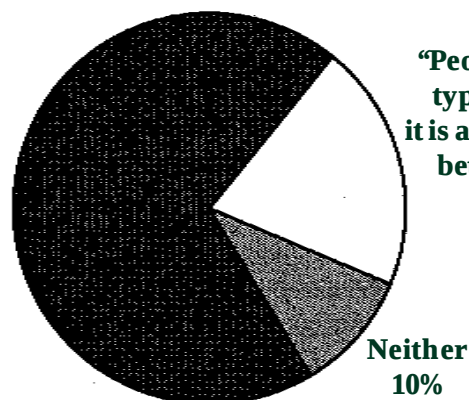
Washingtonians clearly believe children are better off if they are raised by a married mother and father, and that people generally trade one set of problems for another when they divorce.

"A couple with children who is unhappy in their marriage should get a divorce."—48%



"A couple with children who is unhappy in their marriage should remain together for the sake of their kids."—39%

"People who divorce typically trade one set of problems for another."—69%



"People who divorce typically find that it is a springboard to a better life."—21%

For better or for worse?

Divorce illustrates a deficiency in both the health of marriages and the confidence society and individuals place in marriage. Of the currently married Washington state adults represented in this study, almost half (45%) of those married less than six years are previously divorced. More and more, divorce is not only an event that ends a marriage; it is also an event that often precedes marriage.

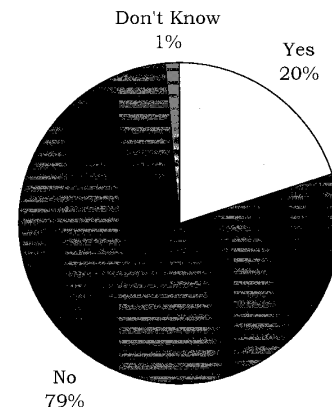
Only one in five (20%) married or separated Washingtonians have seriously considered filing for a divorce, while the vast majority (79%) has not considered divorce. Further analysis shows which characteristics influence whether or not someone is likely to have considered filing for divorce.

← Women are more likely than men to have seriously considered filing for divorce (24% of women, compared to 14% of men).

← Middle-aged married individuals are more likely to have considered divorce than younger marrieds (24% of married 35-49-year-olds, compared to 7% of married 18-24-year-olds).

← A higher percentage of those who are currently married, but previously divorced, have seriously considered filing for divorce

Key finding:
Though Washingtonians have strong opinions about when divorce is appropriate and when it is not, current law in Washington allows divorce for any reason at any time.



Have you ever seriously considered filing for divorce?

than those who are in their first marriage (29% of previously divorced, compared to 16% of never divorced).

← Those who give the strength of their marriage a 6- to 8-rating are more likely to have considered divorce than those who rate their marriage a 9 or 10 (36% of 6-8, compared to 11% of 9-10).

Washington state adults clearly believe that divorce is a valid consideration under some circumstances, but it should not be considered under others. Abuse or abandonment of a spouse or children is clearly seen as a reason to consider divorce for almost all adults (94%). More than half of Washingtonians (59%) agreed that adultery is grounds to consider filing for divorce, while less than half (43%) of adults believe that no longer feeling love for one's spouse should cause one to consider divorce.

As strongly as people agree that abuse or abandonment is cause to consider divorce, people believe that feeling attracted to someone else is not cause to consider divorce. Cultural messages, however, may lead people to believe that feeling attracted to someone else is a sign of diminishing love for one's spouse.

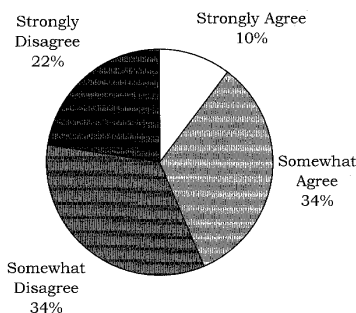
There is practically universal agreement that abuse and abandonment are acceptable reasons to consider divorce, while attraction to someone other than a spouse is an unacceptable rationale. Further analysis showed no subgroup significantly differing from this agreement, nor did it find more than 10 percent of any subgroup holding the opposite opinion.

There are some differences, however, among those who believe adultery is a reason to consider divorce.

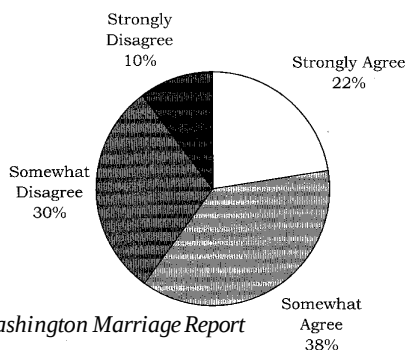
←Individuals who are living with a significant other or who are engaged are significantly more likely than married and single-never-married people to see adultery as a legitimate cause for considering divorce (79% of cohabiting/engaged, compared to 57% of married and 56% of singles).

←Those who seldom or never attend religious services are more likely to agree that cheating justifies divorce than those who attend services regularly (63% of seldom attenders and 64% of those who never attend agree, compared to 50% of regular attenders).

“A person should consider filing for divorce if they no longer feel love for their spouse.”



“A person should consider filing for divorce if their spouse has cheated on them.”



When do you give up on love?

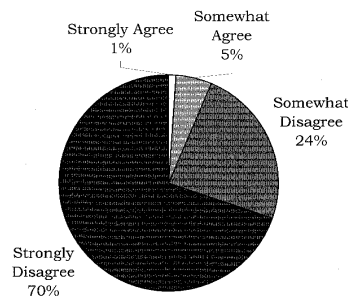
←The length of time people know their spouse before marriage seems to influence their agreement that “no longer feeling love for your spouse” is cause to consider divorce. Adults who knew their spouse for more than three years prior to marriage were more likely to agree with this idea than those who knew their spouse for less than a year before marriage (48% of the “3-years-plus” group, compared to 31% of the “less-than-a-year” group agreed). Additionally, those who knew their spouse less than a year were more likely to disagree with this idea as cause to consider divorce than those who knew each other longer than 3 years (66% of the “less-than-a-year” group, compared to 50% of the “3-years-plus” group disagreed).

←Religious behavior, again, impacts Washingtonians’ likelihood of agreement that no longer feeling love for your spouse is reason to consider divorce. Those who pray with their spouse or attend church services regularly are more likely to disagree with this idea than those who pray together or attend services occasionally. Both of these groups are more likely to disagree than are people who never pray or attend services.

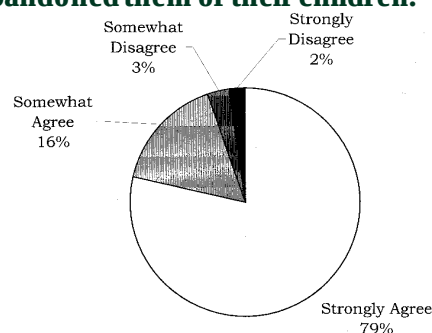
←Younger people are more likely to agree that cheating gives cause to consider divorce than are older people (69% of 25-34 year-olds, compared to 55% of 35-49-year-olds and 49% of 50-64-year-olds).

←People married by a justice of the peace are more likely to consider cheating grounds for divorce than those married by a minister or rabbi (70%, compared to 55%).

“A person should consider filing for divorce if they feel attracted to someone else.”



“A person should consider filing for divorce if their spouse has abused or abandoned them or their children.”



What role does government play in divorce?

Washington state adults were asked how the laws should govern a situation where one spouse wants a divorce and the other wants to stay together and try to work things out. Less than one-quarter (23%) said the current laws, which “allow them to get a divorce with no penalty,” were appropriate. Well more than half (61%) of the adults in this state selected options that would require changes be made to current law, making the law more strict.

More than one-third (36%) said that one-sided (unilateral) divorce should not be allowed except in cases of abuse, adultery, or abandonment. Another 25 percent believe the divorce should be allowed but that the spouse who wants to abandon the marriage without grounds should be required to give up custody of any children and more than half of the couple’s assets.

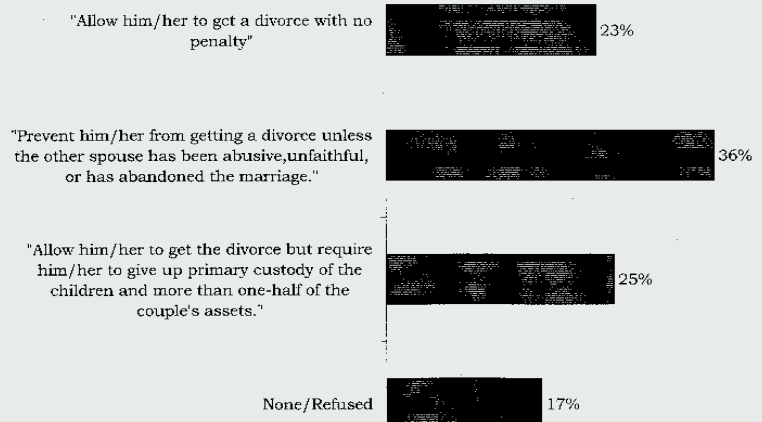
←Self-identified conservatives and liberals were both more likely to select the second option, “prevent the divorce except in cases of abuse, adultery, or abandonment,” than those who consider themselves moderate (42% of conservatives and 33% of liberals, compared to 15% of moderates).

←Individuals who are satisfied with their marriages, evidenced by their desire to marry the same person again, are also more likely to say that the divorce should be prevented with exceptions (41% of those who would marry the same person again chose the second option, compared to 20% of those who would not marry the same person again).

←Younger respondents were more likely to select the “penalty” option than older respondents. Thirty-nine percent of 18-24-year-olds chose the third option, compared to 20 percent of 50-64-year-olds and 17 percent of people over 65.

Washingtonians were also asked to evaluate how effective they think certain divorce reforms would be in strengthening marriages. Nearly four out of every five (79%) adults believes requiring couples to participate in counseling before they divorce could be effective in strengthening the institution of marriage. Just slightly fewer (69%) say requiring longer waiting periods before allowing a couple to divorce would be effective at helping marriage.

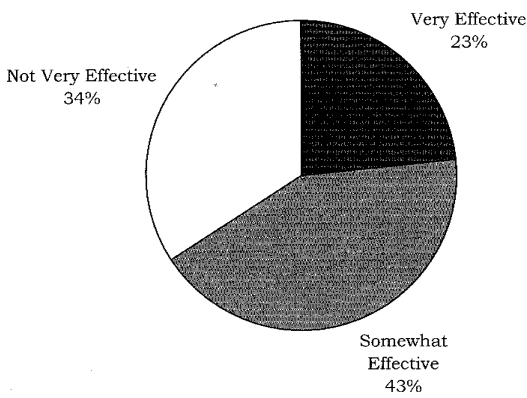
Consider a situation where one spouse wants to get a divorce but the other wants to try and work things out and stay together. How do you think the law ought to treat the spouse who wants to get a divorce?



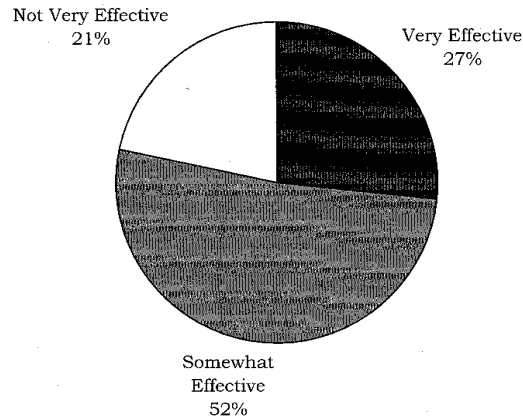
Key finding:

According to the people of Washington state, there are clearly some steps government can take to reform divorce law that may be effective in strengthening the institution of marriage.

How effective would longer waiting periods before divorce be in strengthening the institution of marriage?



How effective would mandatory pre-divorce counseling be in strengthening the institution of marriage?



←Women are more likely to see both proposals as effective than are men (87% of women evaluated counseling as effective, compared to 67% of men; 72% of women think longer waiting periods would be effective, compared to 56% of men).

←Self-identified liberals are more likely to see counseling as effective than conservatives or moderates (84% of liberals, compared to 74% of conservatives and 68% of moderates).

←Conservatives and liberals are both more likely than moderates to describe longer waiting periods as effective (67% of conservatives and 63% of liberals, compared to 49% of moderates).

←Married, separated/divorced, and single-never-married individuals are all significantly more likely to see longer waiting periods as effective than those who are living with a significant other or who are engaged (67% of married people, 66% of separated/divorced people, and 69% of single-never-married individuals, compared to 28% of cohabiting/engaged people).

←Those who have been married longer see more effectiveness in longer waiting periods than people married a shorter length of time (72% of those married 11-plus years said longer waiting periods would be effective, compared to 52% of those married less than six years).

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Marriage- Strengthening Recommendations

Recommendations

This research has identified several attitudes and behaviors that will improve the health of, and confidence in, marriage for Washington state. Implementing some of these strategies will help Washingtonians strengthen the institution of marriage for individual benefit, as well as for the benefit of future generations ... from this day forward.

From this day forward, individuals can help strengthen marriage

←Take stock of your personal priorities to assure that relationships with your spouse and your children are getting the time and attention they need and deserve. Gain time by looking to simplify your activities and spending, starting with something as simple as turning off the television for a day, a week, or a month.

←Make a public declaration of the importance of your marriage by renewing your wedding vows in the presence of family and friends.

←Invest in the strength of your

marriage by participating in premarital counseling before marriage or by skill-building in communication and conflict resolution with your spouse.

←Consider mentoring a younger married couple. Share your experiences and insights on marriage with them, and gain fresh enthusiasm and energy in your own marriage.

From this day forward, extended family can help strengthen marriage

←Be supportive of the marriages in your family. Celebrate anniversaries. Volunteer to baby-sit so your parents, children, or siblings can spend time building their marriage. Listen to each other's stories of courtship, early marriage, struggles, and successes.

←Role model marriage for the children



in your family and in your peer group. Be an example to those who may not have the marriage relationship modeled in their own home.

←Sponsor married couples in your family on a Marriage Encounter weekend.

From this day forward, churches can help strengthen marriage

←Teach your congregation about the institution of marriage and about the marriage relationship. Encourage and equip people to meet high standards of commitment, fidelity, honesty, and accountability in their relationships.

←Honor marriages that have persevered through hard times or long years by encouraging couples to renew their wedding vows as a public testimony of their commitment.

←Require marriage preparation of all couples getting married in your church. Network with other churches in your community to provide premarital counseling, inventories, and marriage mentoring.

←Offer marriage-enrichment seminars and classes as special events and ongoing programs in your church's education plans. Teach couples about the importance of praying together and the benefits they could recognize from such practice.



←Recognizing that couples will go through struggles in their marriage, provide instruction and counseling in conflict resolution. Encourage couples who have experienced hard times and worked through them to mentor couples who are struggling.

←Sponsor church "date nights" on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. Provide children's activities and supervision at the church so that married couples can share dinner alone and then have some entertainment at the church (possibly a music performance or marriage speaker) to conclude the evening.

←Establish marriage-mentoring programs that partner newlyweds with couples who have been married more than 10 years. Both couples can learn from one another's experiences, insights, and enthusiasm for their marriages.

continued ...



- ← Participate in creating or applying a community-marriage agreement with other churches in your area. Community-marriage agreements set standards for marriage preparation and demonstrate a commitment by local churches to support and nurture marriages in all stages of life.

*From this day forward,
members of the media can help
strengthen marriage*

- ← Portray marriage as the positive and healthy relationship that it is for the majority of people. Don't unrealistically glamorize divorce in programming and coverage. Make sure the picture of reality that is created by media is truly reflective of "real life."
- ← Investigate deeply when you report and write. Don't report statistics in a misleading way that paint a damaging picture of marriage and family.
- ← Create and market public-service

announcements highlighting the importance and value of marriage and family.

- ← Use the influence of media to introduce positive, marriage-strengthening behaviors to the public—spouses "dating," couples working through conflict, and people investing time in marriage relationships.

- ← Feature stories of perseverance and reconciliation in marriages.

*From this day forward, educators
can help strengthen marriage*

- ← Present accurate information to students about the psychological, emotional, and physical benefits of marriage.
- ← Provide positive examples of marriage to students, since some may not see marriages modeled at home.
- ← Include parents in the decision about what their children are taught about marriage, sexuality, and family life.
- ← Review studies on marriage such as "Marriage in America: A Report to the Nation," by the Council on Families in America, and "Closed Hearts, Closed Minds: The Textbook Study of Marriage," by Norval Glenn of the Institute for American Values.

*From this day forward, government
can help strengthen marriage*

←Adopt the standard that all legislation and policies must “first, do no harm” to the strength and integrity of marriages and families. Examine all legislation for its impact on marriage and family.

←Evaluate current divorce law and explore ways to ensure that there is justice, protection and a respect for the marriage commitment in divorce proceedings.

←Never let service to your country, state, county or city supercede service to your spouse and children. Make sure your own family is a priority, so you can more easily respect the priority marriage and family are for so many of the people you represent.

←Uphold and codify a legal definition of marriage that recognizes the societal value—to individuals and to children—of the complementary relationship of one man and one woman committed to each other for life.

*From this day forward, businesses
can help strengthen marriage*

←Recognize that your employees are husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, and members of extended families and commu-

nities even while they are at work. Reflect that understanding in your personnel practices and policies.

←Make efforts to minimize the time an employee spends away from his or her family by exploring flex-time options, reducing overtime, and cutting back on work-related travel when and where possible.

←Offer resources to your employees—books, tapes, videos, or seminars—that deal with family topics such as marriage-relationship building, family finances, effective parenting and child development.



Methodology

Wirthlin Worldwide, a Virginia-based, international research firm, assisted with survey design and performed all data collection and data analysis related to the original research presented in this report. Their methodology is reported as follows.

“This study contains results from a sample of 408 adults in Washington who are at least 18 years of age or older. This sample was stratified by region according to the census population data. In addition, the sample was validated according to gender, age, and educational attainment to ensure accurate representation of the state’s adult population. The margin of error for a sample size of 408 is ± 4.9 percentage points in 95 out of 100 cases.

“Interviews in Washington were conducted during evening and weekend hours from Sept. 10 - 14, 1997.”

This report was created using material from Wirthlin’s summary of findings and results of cross-tabulation. Any variation in reported percentages of ± 1 percentage point within this report is due only to rounding.

About Washington Family Council

Washington Family Council is a non-profit communication, research and education organization working to strengthen the family through informed citizenship and improved public policy. Washington Family Council is uniquely positioned to multiply its efforts by networking with various leaders in the state who can help change hearts and attitudes about the importance of family. The following are four areas in which WFC has strategically determined to work with leaders to improve family life in Washington state.

1 Community

Networking people together and building bridges between people in our state is an essential part of WFC's work. In WFC's constituent-services department, staff members are dedicated to connecting people with the resources, information and organizations they need to handle family or community concerns. WFC has also started Marriage Builders, which seeks to bring local-level action and concern to strengthening marriages. WFC also joins and serves churches and service organizations that seek opportunities to help people in times of crisis and economic hardship.

2 Public Policy

Although public policy cannot solve society's ills, it can uphold principles that make a society stronger. WFC encourages policy makers to choose to make family the primary consideration in their decisions. The Family Issues Guide is a tool WFC created and distributed to all state legislators. It includes case studies, practical analysis and talking points on family-related issues. In 1997, WFC held a briefing that brought experts in the fields of

parenting, welfare and abstinence education to Olympia legislators. WFC also had the opportunity to testify 17 times on family-related legislation in 1997.

3 Media

Mass media has the ability to highlight and shape the issues of the day. But the treatment given to those issues is not one that resonates with many families we work with. Through letters to various editors, editorials, speaking to a plethora of reporters and producing public-service announcements, WFC is able to send a message that does ring true to families. WFC also introduces the media to news stories by writing its own articles about issues often missed by the mainstream press. By producing articles for Washington Citizen, issuing press releases to the media and highlighting vital news in the Community Impact Bulletin, WFC is informing families about important issues.

4 Business

Employers have the opportunity to empower employees to strengthen their families, while improving business productivity. This is the message WFC Executive Director Jeff Kemp has brought to more than 1,500 Rotarians and other business leaders around the state. Kemp urges business people to help employees make family a priority, asking them to lead by example. WFC also provides packets of information, showing how business leaders in small and large corporations can implement family-friendly policies in the workplace.

For more information about this marriage research, Marriage Builders, WFC's marriage public-service announcements, or other WFC projects, please contact us.

Washington Family Council

P.O. Box 40584

Bellevue, WA 98015

phone (425) 637-5959/fax (425) 637-5955

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