

## Why are fewer people getting married?

Written by Timothy Houston  
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The number of people getting married has fallen to the lowest level since records began in 1862. The figures from the Office for National Statistics showed that the average age for men to marry in 2005 was 36.2 and for women it was 33.6. Among people over 18, barely 50% of all adults are now married. In 1960, 72% of people over the age of 18 were married. Why are less people getting married? How will this decline impact us as a community?

Although we don't know the exact reason why less people are getting married, the declining numbers are a clear sign that marriage is less important in the lives of Americans than it used to be. In the past, people got married at a younger age. Back in the baby boom days people were in their early-20's, in the 1990's they were in their mid-20's, and now we are seeing a greater number of people waiting until their 30's to get married for the first time. What is the root cause of this trend? There are a number of things that could play a role in the decline in marriages.

First, there are other kinds of living arrangements that are now socially acceptable, such as living with someone without being married, living on your own, or even living as a single parent. Secondly, more people are waiting to complete college and get into a career before they settle down and get married. Finally, some surveys indicate that at least for men, it is now more important to be financially able to provide for a family before they get married. Although there are many more reasons that factor into the equations of why fewer men and women are getting married, the bottom line is that fewer marriages are occurring.

The decline in marriages is not good for us as a community. Economically speaking, married couples tend to have more income and more wealth. We also know that the kind of partnership marriage encourages is one in which you plan for the future, share your assets, and build wealth together. This increased wealth enables couples to own their own homes, invest in business, or send their children to college. This type of planning occurs less in relationships where couples live together. It should also be noted that although most children turn out well regardless of whether their parents are married or not, there's a somewhat higher likelihood that they will face issues related to the economic hardship that is created from a lack of long term financial planning.

What do we do now? We as a people can reverse this trend. As people of faith, we band together and declare to the world that marriage is still honorable. The words of the traditional

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wedding vows still ring true today. "*Marriage is an honorable estate instituted of God since the first man and woman walked on the earth. Therefore, it is not to be entered into unadvisedly, or lightly, but reverently and soberly.*" It is into this holy estate that two people are joined, families are strengthened, wealth is created, and communities prosper.

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