

PRESS RELEASE FROM MARRIAGE
FOUNDATION

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Marriage
Foundation

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First comes love, then comes marriage... tying the knot before first baby is a key ingredient for marriage success

In the first ever UK study of its kind, new research from Marriage Foundation, a think tank dedicated to building stronger families, has found that the recipe for relationship success lies in making the decision to commit before starting a family.

Marriage Foundation, which was set up in 2012 by former High Court judge Sir Paul Coleridge, has found that 76 per cent of mothers who married before giving birth remained intact, compared to 44 per cent of those who married after they had their first child.

The difference between tying the knot before children and after was found to have a greater impact on a couple's chance of success than their level of education.

Among women who married before their first child, 82 per cent with a degree stayed together, only marginally above the 74 per cent of non-degree educated women.

The research, by Harry Benson, Research Director of Marriage Foundation with analysis by Stephen McKay, a professor in social research at Lincoln University, used the latest data from Understanding Society, a UK longitudinal study that regularly surveys 40,000 households.

Harry Benson commented: "This is really exciting new research which shows that education and age do not dictate the success of relationships as was previously thought.

"It barely seems to matter if women are younger or older, degree educated or not; so long as they make a plan for their future and marry before starting a family, they have a really good chance of making that relationship last.

"It stands to reason that there's one system that works best. It's one that worked for years.

"While it is right that we have done away with the social shame of having children outside marriage, we should not lose confidence in the value of crystallising commitment before starting a family.

"The message of this research is clear. For any couple thinking of having children, their best chance of staying together in the long run is by getting married first."

In line with previous Marriage Foundation research, 92 per cent of the couples surveyed who remained intact after fifteen years were married.

Of the mothers who were cohabiting at the time of their first child's birth and never took the decision to marry stayed together, only 31 per cent had avoided family breakdown by the time their child took their GCSEs.

Marriage Foundation is launching a manifesto, which urges the Government to overcome their trepidation in championing marriage as the best chance families have to stay together.

Sir Paul Coleridge, director of Marriage Foundation, said, "The next government has a real chance to reduce the marriage gap between the haves and the have-nots. There is a serious and growing cause of real social inequality.

"The myths and misperceptions, such as that cohabitation is as stable as marriage should be eradicated by clear public statements and education.

"Governments cannot legislate directly for stronger families but they can foster the right environment and so make a real difference.

"They spend £46 billion a year on family breakdown, mostly due to the increased tax credits and benefits awarded to single parents, and even more on the increased rates of truancy, juvenile delinquency and crime among people from broken homes.

"It is therefore firmly in the Government's interests, as well as individuals', to tackle the worrying rise in family instability in the UK."

The Marriage Foundation manifesto also calls for a cabinet level Minister for Families, a tax and benefit system that supports marriage and sustained relationships, a fund to promote relationships for both children and adults and a complete modernisation of the family law system.

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Notes to editors:

For media inquiries please contact Beatrice Timpson on 07803 726 977.
Harry Benson is available to be interviewed, on 07515 699187.

Marriage Foundation was founded by Sir Paul Coleridge, a High Court Judge, moved by his personal experience in 40 years as a barrister and judge specialising in family law. The Foundation seeks to improve public understanding of marriage reduce the numbers of people drawn into the family justice system – some 500,000 children and adults each year.

Marriage Foundation has highlighted the crisis of family breakdown. Their research has found that a child born today only has a 55 per cent chance of living with both parents by the time they reach fifteen.

Foundation research has also found that 92 percent of parents who stay together until their child's fifteenth birthday are married.

A source of statistics on marriage, cohabitation, commitment, divorce and family breakdown can be found on the [Marriage Foundation website](#).

