



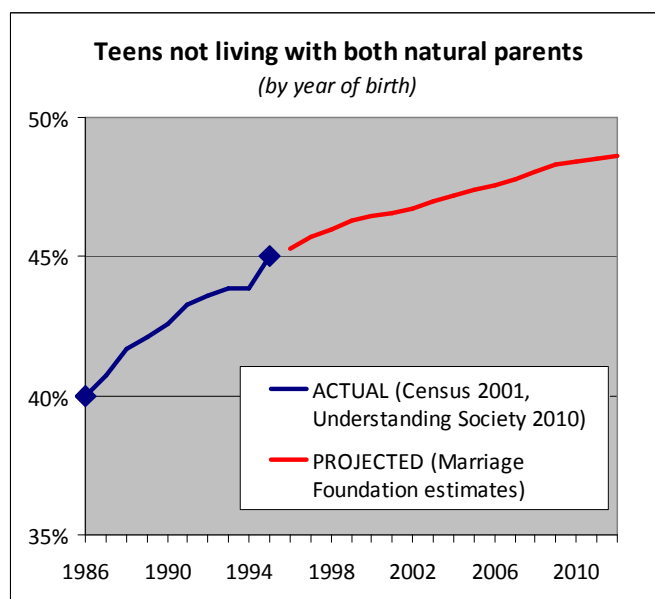
The
Marriage
Foundation

Record births outside marriage means Record rates of family breakdown

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Briefing note, October 2013

- The annual release of birth data from the Office for National Statistics shows that births outside marriage have reached a new record high.
- 47% of babies born in 2012 were born to unmarried parents.
- This matters because unmarried couples are far more likely to split up than married couples.
- The equation is simple: Fewer marriages means more family breakdown.
- In the past decade, actual rates of family breakdown – defined as teenagers not living with both natural parents – have risen from 40% in 2001 to 45% in 2010.
- Of the 729,674 births, 41,879 (6%) were registered to one parent; 119,148 (16%) were not living with their father.
- By the time they take their GCSEs, we project that some 354,000 (49%) will not be living with both natural parents.
- Based on current trends, the babies born in 2012 will therefore face record rates of family breakdown.

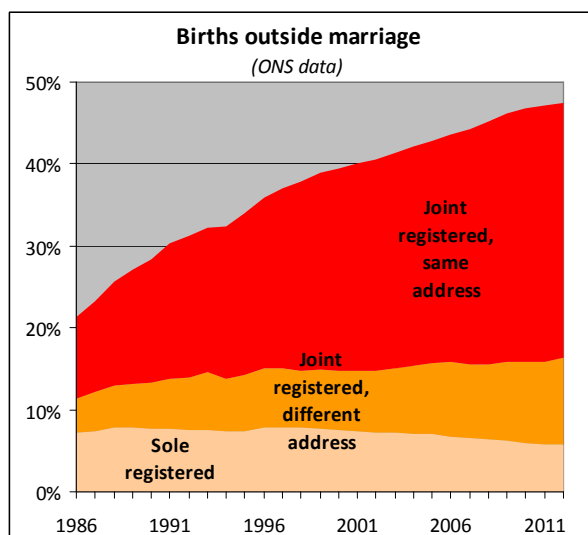


BIRTHS OUTSIDE MARRIAGE HAVE RISEN TO ANOTHER RECORD HIGH

In 2012, 47% were born to unmarried parents. Of these

- 31% are joint registered at the same address
- 11% are joint registered at different addresses
- 6% are sole registered

The trends can be clearly seen in the chart below. 80% of the change in births outside marriage since 1986 is amongst unmarried couples jointly registered at the same address.

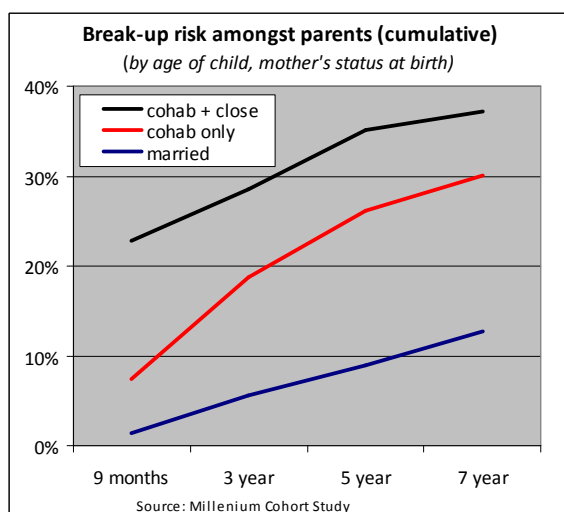


UNMARRIED COUPLES ARE MORE LIKELY TO SPLIT UP

Part of the reason for the increased risk to couples who don't marry is due to background factors – age, education, income, etc. However around half of the increase in risk is due to relational factors related to marriage and cohabitation (see Marriage Foundation press release, 23 July 2013)

The chart below shows the increasing risk of break-up amongst a large national sample of parents with children born in the year 2000 or 2001.

In contrast with the 13% of married couples who have split up by their child's seventh birthday, 30% of cohabiting couples have split up. If we include couples who describe themselves as "closely involved", 37% of unmarried couples have split up.

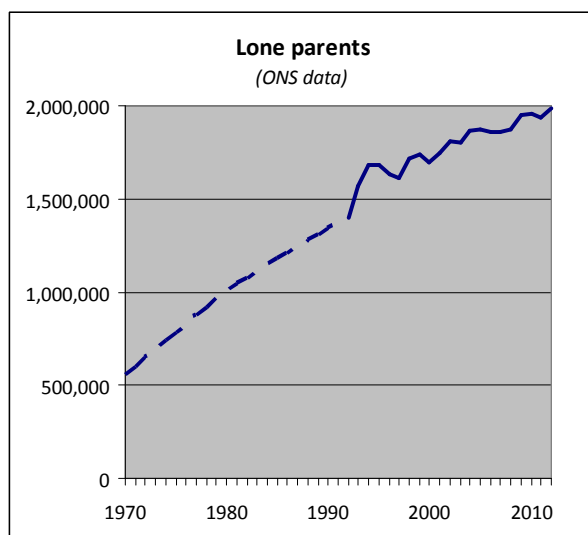


LONE PARENTHOOD HAS RISEN FOR DECADES

The chart on the front cover of this note shows that actual rates of family breakdown have risen sharply, even over the nine years from 2001 to 2010.

This trend has continued since the 1960s.

- In 1970 there were 600,000 lone parent families
- In 1980 there were 1 million
- Today there are 2 million



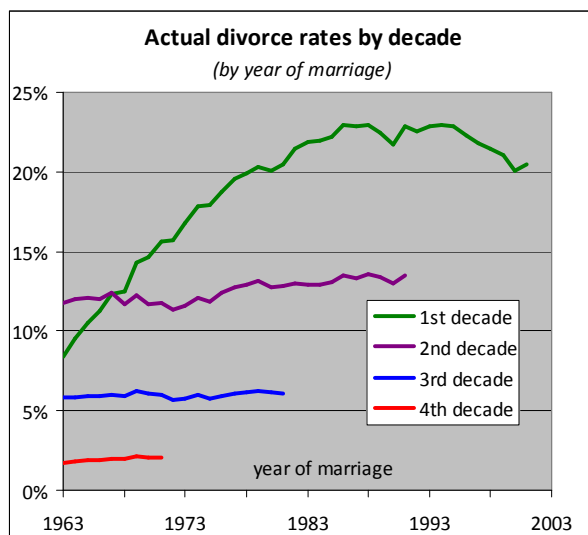
DIVORCE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RISE SINCE 1980

In previous papers for Marriage Foundation (Benson, February 2013) we have shown how all of the change in divorce rates takes place in the first decade of marriage. After that, divorce rates have changed little since the 1960s.

Yet even during this first decade of married life, divorce rates rose only slightly during the 1980s and then fell from the mid 1990s onwards – see the green line in the chart below.

The rise in lone parenthood from around 1980 cannot therefore be attributed to divorce. It can only be due to the increased proportion of births outside of marriage and associated greater risk of family breakdown.

The equation is simple. Fewer marriages means more family breakdown.



MOST FAMILY BREAKDOWN WILL HAPPEN OUTSIDE MARRIAGE

In another previous paper for Marriage Foundation (Benson, May 2013), we presented a model that linked actual births outside marriage to actual family breakdown. This was based on data from Census 2001 and Understanding Society 2010.

The assumptions within the model – which reconciled estimates for the proportion of married couples who stay together and proportion of unmarried couples who marry and stay together – held true for both of these datasets nine years apart.

Using these assumptions, I can project the likely circumstances for the 2012 babies as they become young teenagers

Amongst a typical group of 100 babies born in 2012

- 53 were born to married couple parents
- 42 were born to unmarried couple parents
- 6 were born to lone parents who did not register a father's name

When these babies become teenagers and sit their GCSEs around 2027

- 51 will be living with both parents, of whom 46 will be married – 37 were married at the start, 9 got married along the way
- 49 will not be living with both parents, of whom 16 will have married and then divorced while 33 will never have married.

The charts below present the estimated outcomes in more detail for parents who remain intact and parents who split up.

