



## Early marriages stronger for 8th year running

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- Marriages are getting stronger.
- Data for divorces taking place in 2012 have been released today by the Office for National Statistics. My immediate analysis of this latest data on behalf of the Marriage Foundation shows that divorce rates in the early years of marriage have now been falling more or less continuously for the last sixteen years.
- Whereas the headline data produced by ONS (“2012 divorces up by 0.5% on 2011”) looks at the *year in which divorce takes place*, my analysis looks at how divorce rates vary depending on the *year in which marriage takes place*. According to ONS, overseas weddings account for an additional 10-15% of marriages each year. My analysis includes an adjustment of their estimates.
- On this basis, couples marrying in 1991 experienced an all-time peak rate of divorce. An average of 2.12% of couples divorced during each of their first five years of marriage.
- In contrast, couples marrying in 2007 were 35% less likely to divorce during the first five years, compared to the 1991 couples. Their annual divorce rate averaged 1.39% per year.
- Divorce rates in the early years of marriage have actually fallen for eight years running.
- My previous research for Marriage Foundation (Feb, 2013) showed that all of the changes in divorce rates – both up and down – amongst couples marrying since the 1960s has taken place during these early years.
- All of the recent fall also only involves divorces instigated by wives, not husbands. This is consistent with commitment theory suggesting that fewer men now “slide” into marriage due to the “inertia” of social or family pressure. Men who “decide” are more committed.



