



Marriage Foundation

Vanishing Divorce

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- Once couples have survived their first ten years of marriage, the risk of divorce diminishes with every year until more or less vanishing altogether among couples married for fifty years.
- This finding – based on analysis of data from Office for National Statistics (ONS) – demolishes the argument that the growing prevalence of divorce among older couples has anything to do with higher divorce rates or living longer.
- Couples celebrating their **30th wedding anniversary** face a **one in 25** risk of divorce. The risk drops to just **one in 150** couples among couples celebrating **40 years** of marriage. And for those married **50 years**, the risk of divorce virtually disappears to **one in 1500** couples.
- Thus, even if couples routinely lived until age 100 or older, their odds of divorce would remain largely unchanged from present levels.
- In this short note, I provide a full list of predicted divorce risk from today by year of marriage.

Divorce rates among couples married for ten years or more have changed remarkably little since the 1960s – see chart below (*Benson 2013*).

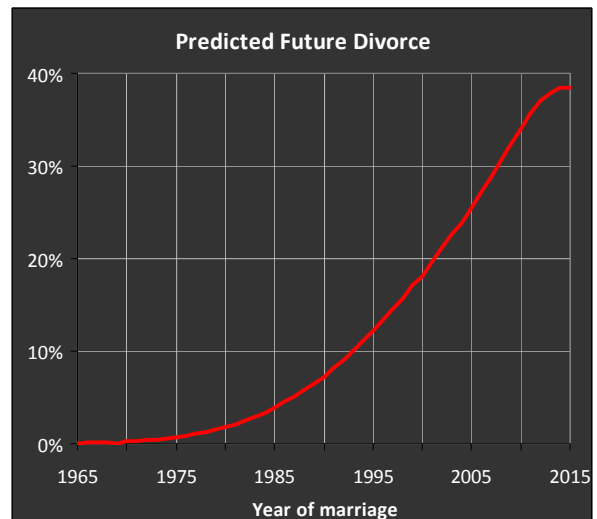
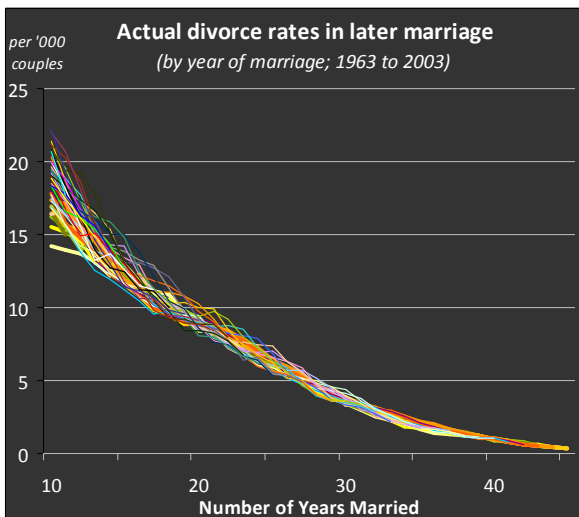
This finding demolishes the myth that rising divorce among the over 50s has anything to do with higher divorce rates or couples living longer.

- More divorces happen later simply because more marriages start later.
- Ever-diminishing divorce rates suggest couples could live together indefinitely.

Based on the latest figures from ONS, the odds of divorce diminish to less than:

- 1% for couples married before 1976;
- 5% for those married before 1986;
- 10% for those married before 1992.

The table on the next page provides full details, for each wedding year between 1963 and 2015, on actual divorces to date as well as the chances of splitting up from today onwards.



MARRIAGE FOUNDATION DIVORCE PREDICTOR

Source: MF analysis of marriage and divorce data from ONS, adjusting for overseas weddings

Year of marriage	Number of years married	How many have divorced to date? (to end of 2015)	How many have yet to divorce?	Total predicted lifetime risk of divorce	Probability of divorce from today	How many couples will divorce
1963	52	28%	0%	28%	0.0%	
1964	51	30%	0%	30%	0.1%	One in 1,479
1965	50	31%	0%	31%	0.1%	
1966	49	32%	0%	32%	0.1%	
1967	48	33%	0%	33%	0.1%	
1968	47	32%	0%	33%	0.1%	
1969	46	35%	0%	35%	0.0%	One in 436
1970	45	35%	0%	35%	0.2%	
1971	44	36%	0%	36%	0.3%	
1972	43	35%	0%	35%	0.3%	
1973	42	36%	0%	37%	0.4%	
1974	41	38%	0%	38%	0.6%	One in 148
1975	40	37%	0%	38%	0.7%	
1976	39	39%	1%	39%	0.9%	
1977	38	40%	1%	41%	1.1%	
1978	37	40%	1%	41%	1.3%	
1979	36	41%	1%	42%	1.6%	One in 54
1980	35	40%	1%	41%	1.8%	
1981	34	40%	1%	42%	2.1%	
1982	33	42%	1%	43%	2.5%	
1983	32	41%	2%	43%	2.9%	
1984	31	41%	2%	43%	3.4%	One in 25
1985	30	41%	2%	43%	3.9%	
1986	29	42%	3%	44%	4.6%	
1987	28	41%	3%	44%	5.1%	
1988	27	41%	3%	44%	5.8%	
1989	26	40%	4%	44%	6.5%	One in 14
1990	25	38%	4%	43%	7.2%	
1991	24	39%	5%	44%	8.2%	
1992	23	38%	6%	43%	9.0%	
1993	22	37%	6%	44%	10.1%	
1994	21	36%	7%	43%	11.2%	One in 8
1995	20	35%	8%	43%	12.3%	
1996	19	34%	9%	43%	13.4%	
1997	18	32%	10%	42%	14.5%	
1998	17	31%	11%	42%	15.7%	
1999	16	30%	12%	42%	17.0%	One in 6
2000	15	28%	13%	41%	18.1%	
2001	14	27%	14%	41%	19.7%	
2002	13	25%	16%	41%	21.2%	
2003	12	24%	17%	41%	22.7%	
2004	11	21%	19%	40%	23.9%	One in 4
2005	10	19%	21%	39%	25.5%	
2006	9	16%	23%	39%	27.2%	
2007	8	14%	25%	39%	28.9%	
2008	7	11%	27%	38%	30.5%	
2009	6	9%	29%	38%	32.3%	One in 2.9
2010	5	7%	32%	38%	34.1%	
2011	4	4%	34%	38%	35.6%	
2012	3	2%	36%	38%	37.0%	
2013	2	1%	38%	38%	38.0%	
2014	1	0%	38%	38%	38.4%	One in 2.6
2015	0	0%	38%	38%	38.4%	

Reference

Benson, H. (2013) What is the divorce rate? Marriage Foundation: Cambridge.