



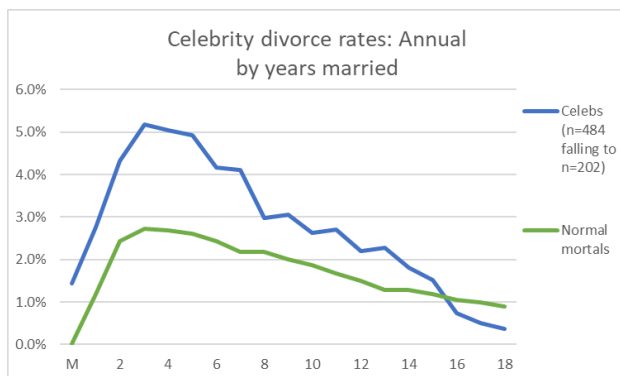
# Marriage Foundation

## Rock 'n Rollers twice as likely to divorce

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- For the past decade, I've been keeping track of a database of 484 A-list celebrities who married between 2001 and 2010 mostly in the UK, but also in the US and Europe. Celebrities, their relationships and extravagant *Hello magazine* weddings attract huge public and media interest. But in terms of stability, they are poor role models.
- In my previous papers, I've shown that half of all celebrity marriages end in divorce within 14 years and that first marriages are typically more likely to end in divorce than second marriages.
- In this analysis I have looked specifically at celebrities by the field in which they achieve their status, whether stars of stage and screen, music, or sports and other categories.
- Over 18 years of marriage, I find an overall divorce rate for celebrities at 53%, compared to 32% for us normal mortals in the UK population as a whole. First marriages end at a rate of 58% compared to second marriages that end at a rate of 47%.
- However the highest divorce rates of all are found among musicians with an overall divorce rate of 60%. Stars of stage and screen fare marginally better at 53%, with sportsmen and other celebrities at 42%, still higher than the rest of us.

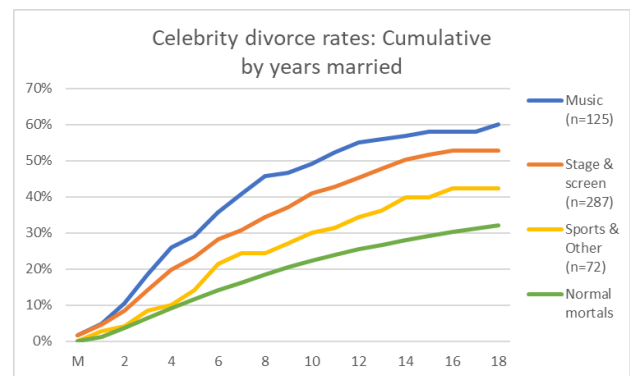


As found previously (*Azim & Benson 2012; Benson & Azim 2016, Benson 2020*), our sample of 484 celebrity couples fare consistently worse than the rest of us normal mortals throughout their marriages.

Their pattern of annual divorce may be similar to the rest of us, peaking during the early years of marriage before gradually tailing off after about eight years.

So why do celebs do so much worse overall, despite being cushioned by higher income that is usually associated with greater stability (*Benson 2022*)?

Why do musicians do worst of all, with 60% ending in divorce compared to 53% of actors and 42% of others?



**Ego and opportunity** would seem the most likely explanations. Being constantly told how wonderful they are is bound to boost ego, undermining the need to put others first, a pre-requisite for successful relationship. And being surrounded by attractive starlets presents obvious opportunity.

But only rock stars experience the special combination of adrenaline-fuelled performance in front of huge adoring audiences that are then followed by the celebration parties afterwards well-known for their exuberance and frolics.

Self-control and commitment might handle that once or twice. But night after night?

## Rich and Famous

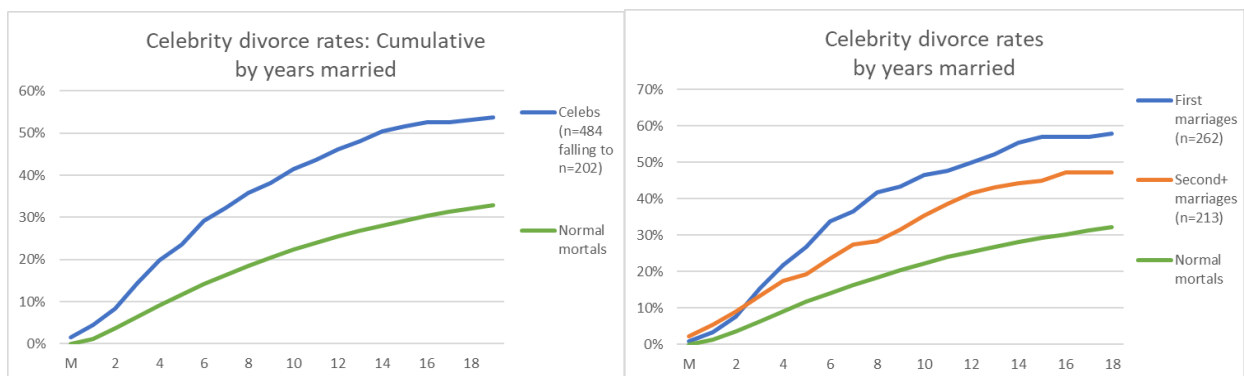
Money may not buy you happiness. But it does generally increase your odds of happily ever after.

Married or not, the rich are generally more likely to stay together than the poor. And it's a sliding scale. The richer you are the more likely you are to make your relationship last. Being married and rich tends to produce the best results of all (*Benson 2022*).

Intuitively this is obvious. It's clearly harder to make a relationship last if you live on benefits in a small council flat than if you have a good job and live in a large detached house in a leafy area.

By definition most celebrities are famous precisely because they do something that people are willing to pay money to see, whether they are movie stars, footballers or rockstars. So celebrities are generally right at the top of the income scale and, amongst those who marry, ought therefore to have the most stable relationships of all. But they don't.

I have a database of 484 celebrity couples who married between 2001 and 2010. Their names were taken from glossy magazines such as *Hello!* and *OK!* and I have tracked their marriages and divorces mostly via Wikipedia and occasionally wider google searches. Divorce rates are calculated by how many couples have divorced within x years of marriage among those who married x years ago. My available sample reduces slightly from an initial 484 couples to 470 couples after 10 years due to deaths. But because the most recent weddings occurred only 12 years ago, my sample reduces much faster to 202 couples who married 18 years ago or more. After that numbers become too small to draw sensible conclusions.



As the charts and table on this page illustrate, celebrities divorce at roughly twice the rate of us mortals, with 53% of marriages ending in divorce within 18 years compared to 32% of UK marriages that began in 2001. UK marriages that began in 2010 have an even lower divorce rate of 29%, though clearly this is an estimate this is an estimate based on present trends after the first ten years or so.

Despite their wealth, money doesn't seem to protect the marriages of celebrities.

The problem is fame.

Celebrity and UK divorce rates		0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18
Years married											
<b>Celebrities, by marriage</b>											
<i>n</i> =		484	479	475	472	470	470	466	384	289	202
Annual		1.4%	4.0%	5.5%	5.7%	3.4%	3.4%	2.6%	2.3%	1.0%	0.5%
Cumulative		1%	8%	20%	29%	36%	42%	46%	50%	53%	53%
First		1%	8%	22%	34%	42%	47%	50%	56%	57%	58%
Second+		2%	9%	17%	24%	28%	35%	42%	44%	47%	47%
<b>UK marriages in 2001 (MF analysis of ONS data)</b>											
Annual		0.0%	2.4%	2.7%	2.4%	2.2%	1.9%	1.5%	1.3%	1.1%	0.9%
Cumulative		0%	4%	9%	14%	18%	22%	25%	28%	30%	32%

## Celebrities by Category

In this analysis, I've divided celebrities into categories of music, screen, and sports/other. At 60%, music stars have the highest divorce rate over 18 years, followed by screen stars at 53%. Sports and other stars have the lowest divorce rate at 42%, yet this is still higher than the UK average at 32%.

All of this suggests a narrative. Fame in itself appears to put a special pressure on relationships, however it is the combination of **ego** and **opportunity** that seem especially challenging for those who are married. It is easy to imagine a celebrity world where all around you fawn over you and tell you how great you are. It is also imagine a celebrity world filled with attractive alternatives who provide temptation and opportunity.

While this combination may not be quite so toxic for sportsmen and women whose daily routines tend to involve tremendous self-discipline and little to no alcohol, ego and opportunity are clearly sufficient to raise divorce risk above average levels.

For screen stars it is also easy to imagine how inappropriate close relationships can become established with other fellow actors because of the intimacy and suspension of normal daily life required to pretend to be somebody else during a film or theatre season.

But it is rock stars who face the highest risk to their marriages, with adrenaline-fuelled nightly performances on tour in front of huge crowds followed by after parties, alcohol and opportunity.

Years married		0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18
<b>Music</b>	<i>n</i> =	125	124	122	121	120	120	117	98	77	51
	Cumulative	2%	10%	26%	36%	46%	49%	55%	57%	58%	60%
<b>Screen</b>	<i>n</i> =	287	284	283	281	281	281	280	231	173	123
	Cumulative	2%	8%	20%	28%	34%	41%	45%	50%	53%	53%
<b>Sports/Other</b>	<i>n</i> =	72	71	70	70	69	69	69	55	39	28
	Cumulative	0%	4%	10%	21%	24%	30%	34%	40%	42%	42%

## Celebrity Successes

Before looking at marriages among musicians in more detail, let's appreciate some of the celebrities in our database who have bucked the 'celebrity divorce' trend and made their marriage work over a long period of time.

Well done to TV presenters Gabby Logan, Richard Hammond, Tess Daly, Alexander Armstrong and Holly Willoughby, comedian Michael McIntyre, designer Stella McCartney, actors Cillian Murphy, Simon Pegg and Rupert Penry-Jones, and footballers Michael Owen, Steven Gerrard and Gary Neville, to mention a few.

First Marriages - Still Married	Married	Years	Category	First Marriages - Still Married	Married	Years	Category
Tina Fey and Jeff Richmond	2001	21	Screen	Cillian Murphy and Yvonne McGuinness	2004	18	Screen
Ice-T and Coco Austin	2001	21	Music	Patrick Rafter and Lara Feltham	2004	18	Sports
Aled Jones and Claire Fossett	2001	21	Music	Melissa McCarthy and Ben Falcone	2005	17	Screen
Gabby Logan and Kenny Logan	2001	21	Sports	Simon Pegg and Maureen McCann	2005	17	Screen
Richard Hammond and Mindy Etheridge	2002	20	Screen	Luciana Barroso and Matt Damon	2005	17	Screen
Ricky Ponting and Rianna Ponting	2002	20	Sports	Brandon Flowers and Tana Mundkowsky	2005	17	Music
Jennifer Connelly and Paul Bettany	2003	19	Screen	Michael Owen and Louise Bonsall	2005	17	Sports
Tess Daly and Vernon Kay	2003	19	Screen	Jack Black and Tanya Haden	2006	16	Screen
Adam Sandler and Jacqueline Titone	2003	19	Screen	Pink and Carey Hart	2006	16	Music
Alexander Armstrong and Hannah Armstrong	2003	19	Screen	Jimmy Fallon and Nancy Juvonen	2007	15	Screen
Michael McIntyre and Kitty Ward	2003	19	Screen	Rupert Penry-Jones and Dervla Kirwan	2007	15	Screen
Christy Turlington and Edward Burns	2003	19	Screen	Holly Willoughby and Dan Baldwin	2007	15	Screen
Lindsay Davenport and Jon Leach	2003	19	Sports	Steven Gerrard and Alex Curran	2007	15	Sports
Stella McCartney and Alasdair Willis	2003	19	Other	Gary Neville and Emma Neville	2007	15	Sports

## Musical Divorces

Here are some of the better known (by me at least!) musical stars with whirlwind divorces:

- **Britney Spears:** Married for 55 hours first time round in Las Vegas, her second marriage lasted just three years. Marrying again in 2022, will she be lucky ... one more time?
- **Eminem:** Rapper lost himself by marrying and divorcing the same woman twice. First time lasted two years. Second time round he filed for divorce within three months.
- **Sheena Easton:** Modern girl with four whirlwind marriages. Eight months, eighteen months, one year, and another year.
- **Liam Gallagher:** Oasis singer married definitely/maybe twice, for three and six years respectively.
- **Sinead O'Connor:** Nothing compares to ... four divorces after four years, three years, nine months and one week respectively.

Musical Divorces	Married	Years	Marriage #
Jason Alexander and <b>Britney Spears</b>	2004	0	1
<b>Eminem</b> and Kim Mathers	2006	0	2
<b>Sheena Easton</b> and John Minoli	2002	1	4
MC Harvey and <b>Alesha Dixon</b>	2005	1	1
<b>Ike Turner</b> and Audrey Madison	2006	1	5
<b>Sinéad O'Connor</b> and Steve Cooney	2010	1	1
Cris Judd and <b>Jennifer Lopez</b>	2001	2	2
<b>Natalie Cole</b> and Kenneth H. Dupree	2001	3	3
<b>Sinead O'Connor</b> and Nicholas Sommerlad	2001	3	2
<b>Britney Spears</b> and Kevin Federline	2004	3	2
<b>Myleene Klass</b> and Graham Quinn	2008	3	1
<b>Brian McFadden</b> and <b>Kerry Katona</b>	2002	4	1
<b>Andre Previn</b> and Anne-Sophie Mutter	2002	4	5
<b>Wynonna Judd</b> and D. R. Roach	2003	4	2
Katie Price and <b>Peter Andre</b>	2005	4	1
<b>Avril Lavigne</b> and Deryck Whibley	2006	4	1
<b>Natalie Imbruglia</b> and Daniel Johns	2003	5	1
Chris Evans and <b>Billie Piper</b>	2001	6	2
Heather Mills and <b>Paul McCartney</b>	2002	6	2
<b>Christina Aguilera</b> and Jordan Bratman	2005	6	1
<b>Mariah Carey</b> and Nick Cannon	2008	6	2
Nicole Appleton and <b>Liam Gallagher</b>	2008	6	2

## Love at First Song

Although 60% of famous musicians divorce within 18 years, that means 40% do just fine. Those doing well first time round include Killers singer Brandon Flowers, jazz musician Jools Holland, singer Pink, rocker Keith Urban (whose wife Nicole Kidman was previously married to Top Gun star Tom Cruise), Beyonce and Jay-Z (who appear to have survived the odd hiccup), and former Neighbours star-turned singer Jason Donovan.

Love at first song	Married	Years	Marriage #
<b>Brandon Flowers</b> and Tana Mundkowsky	2005	17	1
<b>Jools Holland</b> and Christabel McEwan	2005	17	1
<b>Pink</b> and Carey Hart	2006	16	1
<b>Keith Urban</b> and Nicole Kidman	2006	16	1
<b>Beyonce Knowles</b> and <b>Jay-Z</b>	2008	14	1
<b>Jason Donovan</b> and Angela Malloch	2008	14	1
<b>Andrea Corr</b> and Brett Desmond	2009	13	1
<b>Rachel Stevens</b> and Alex Bourne	2009	13	1
Sophie Dahl and <b>Jamie Cullum</b>	2010	12	1
<b>Alanis Morissette</b> and Mario Treadway	2010	12	1
<b>Mick Hucknall</b> and Gabiella Wesberry	2010	12	1

## Old Rockers

Plenty of old stars have had a successful second or more attempt at married bliss. Among these are guitar legend Eric Clapton, former Genesis front man Peter Gabriel, U2 guitarist The Edge, Foofighter Dave Grohl, Spandau Ballet stars Gary Kemp and Tony Hadley, Ultravox front man Midge Ure, Sir Rod Stewart, crooner Des O'Connor, Eagles guitarist Joe Walsh, and Queen drummer Roger Taylor.

Old rockers	Married	Years	Marriage #
<b>James Taylor</b> and Caroline Kim Smedvig	2001	21	3
<b>Gladys Knight</b> and William McDowell	2001	21	4
<b>Eric Clapton</b> and Melia McEnery	2002	20	2
<b>Peter Gabriel</b> and Meabh Flynn	2002	20	2
<b>The Edge</b> and Morleigh Steinberg	2002	20	2
<b>Nana Mouskouri</b> and Andre Chapelle	2003	19	2
<b>Dave Grohl</b> and Jordyn Blum	2003	19	2
<b>Gary Kemp</b> and Lauren Barber	2003	19	2
<b>Midge Ure</b> and Sheridan Forbes	2003	19	2
<b>Garth Brooks</b> and Trisha Yearwood	2005	17	2
<b>Rod Stewart</b> and Penny Lancaster	2007	15	3
<b>Des O'Connor</b> and Jodie Wilson	2007	15	4
<b>Iggy Pop</b> and Nina Alu	2008	14	3
<b>Joe Walsh</b> and Marjorie Bach	2008	14	5
<b>Eddie Van Halen</b> and Janie Liszewski	2009	13	2
<b>Tony Hadley</b> and Alison Evers	2009	13	2
<b>Alicia Keys</b> and Swizz Beatz	2010	12	2
<b>Roger Taylor</b> and Sarina Potgieter	2010	12	2
<b>David Essex</b> and Susan Hallam-Wright	2010	12	3
<b>Rick Wakeman</b> and Rachel Kaufman	2011	11	4
<b>Noel Gallagher</b> and Sara Macdonald	2011	11	2

## References

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- Benson, H. & Azim, R. (2016) Celebrity Divorce Rates. Marriage Foundation
- Benson, H. (2020) Celebrity Divorces: First and Second Marriages. Marriage Foundation