



Marriage Foundation

Press Release from Marriage Foundation

Release Date: EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 Sunday 18th December 2022

Rock 'N Rollers twice as likely to divorce, compared with ordinary people, finds new study

Rock stars and musicians are twice as likely to divorce, compared with ordinary people, and fifty per cent more likely than sports stars, finds a major news study.

The study, from Marriage Foundation, has been tracking nearly 500 A-list celebrities who tied the knot between 2001-2010 in “extravagant” ceremonies, which were featured in Hello or similar magazines.

Overall, the study found a divorce rate of 53 per cent for the groups of celebrities, which includes a host of famous names such as Britney Spears, Sheena Easton, Natalie Imbruglia, Mariah Carey and Liam Gallagher.

The study then split them into three groups: musicians, stars of stage and screen and sports/other. It found that musicians, such as rock 'n roll stars were twice as likely to divorce with six in 10 of their marriages ending in failure, compared to just under a third, (32 per cent) of non-celebrities.

Stars of stage and screen fared marginally better, with a divorce rate of 53 per cent, while sports stars/other celebrities had a divorce rate of 42 per cent, still higher than the general population, but much closer than their musical counterparts.

"All of this suggests a narrative. Fame in itself appears to put special pressure on relationships, however, it is the combination of ego and opportunity that seem especially challenging for those who are married," the report says.

"It is easy to imagine a celebrity world where all around fawn over you and tell you how great you are. It is also imagine a celebrity world filled with attractive alternatives that 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."

The report continues: "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...

"Although 60 per cent of famous musicians divorce within 18 years, that means 40 per cent 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."

Harry Benson, research director of Marriage Foundation, commented: "There are several messages that I think we can unpick here, firstly that extra strain that being famous places on marriage, especially when couples are separated for long periods.

“The second lesson is one for the management companies and legions of agents, publicists and so forth who surround these celebrities about the need to do more to support them. Nobody goes into a marriage with the expectation it will fail, indeed research suggests couples marrying for the second or subsequent time enter the marriage with all the same hopes and aspirations as the first. Indeed our survey found that the divorce rate for second marriages among this group was 47 per cent, compared to 58 per cent for first marriages.”

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

The good news for the celebrities continues as the survey found that after 15.5 years of marriage, the divorce rate among A-list celebrities drops below the annual rate for the general public.

Mr Benson continued “Our report finds clear evidence that celebrities, just like the general public, aspire to marry. Given their wealth and privilege, we would normally expect their divorce rates to be low, but they face a unique set of challenges because of their careers, separation, ego and opportunity, hence their high break up rates. However, for those celebrities who make it through the early years of marriage, the rewards are clear. For those married for 18 years, they have a divorce rate, half of that seen in the general public. This is good news for those couples and good news for marriage.”

He concluded: “So, do celebrities make good role models when it comes to marriage? Our study finds that some do and some don’t, but they all recognise that marriage remains the gold standard of relationships.”

Sir Paul Coleridge, founder of Marriage Foundation added: “Marriage Foundation has been tracking the marital fortunes of the rich and famous for almost a decade and two messages have shone through clearly; Firstly the driving aspiration to have a life-long, reliable relationship via marriage which is innate in us all is as strong in that section of society as it is with us more run of the mill folk. Watch the recent interview by Louis Theroux with Stormzy (raised by a brilliant single mother but an absent father). Despite being the headline act at Glastonbury, having hundreds of millions of adoring fans and limitless wealth, his simple driving ambition and priority is to marry and have a “normal” stable family life. However, as he explains, fulfilling

that ambition presents special extra pressures and pitfalls for him as for so many others in his situation.

"Secondly, celebrity status makes achieving such a long-term married relationship that much harder especially in the early years when climbing the "ladder to success". The essential ingredient of investing quality time to sustain a long-term relationship is that much harder to arrange for those whose time is in huge demand and whose lives are subjected to a constant media spotlight. However, for those who get through the very difficult early years their relationships are made even more enduring than normal marriages, no doubt because they have overcome challenges together.

"Whilst the person in the street has, on the day of their marriage, a likelihood of staying together for life, celebs generally have significantly worse odds. However, there are plenty of positive stories and numerous good examples and roll models in the celebrity world those who have achieved an enduring and satisfying marriage."

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Notes to editors

About Marriage Foundation

Marriage Foundation was founded in 2012 by Sir Paul Coleridge, a High Court judge who was moved by his personal experience in 40 years as a barrister and judge specialising in family law. The think tank seeks to improve public understanding of marriage and to reduce the numbers of people drawn into the family justice system – some 500,000 children and adults each year. It has established itself as a leading voice on marriage issues in the UK.

Sir Paul Coleridge, Harry Benson and Michaela Hyde from the Marriage Foundation are available for comment and for interviews linked to these new findings.

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