

Divorce rates in america

[Family](#), [Divorce](#)



America's Divorce Rates: Why Are They So High? The sanctity of marriage is a tradition that has been entered by generations over the past thousands of years. In the United States alone, 2, 200, 000 people choose to enter the lifetime commitment of marriage every year. Yet, less than half of that population is expected to keep that commitment. In a 1999 Rutgers University study, it is said that only 38 percent of Americans consider themselves happy in their married state, which has decreased from 53 percent 25 years ago.

With the current, alarming statistic of over half of marriages resulting in divorce, there is much reason to take notice of how these numbers got so high. Although I personally have not grown up in a divorced household, I sought to understand why so many other people have, and in turn possibly gain knowledge to avoid becoming a part of the divorced population as well. In Steven Nock's article, " America's Divorce Problem," he encloses the important point that " Divorce is not the problem, but rather a symptom of the problem" (1 Nock).

With varying symptoms such as the feminist movement in the 1960s, an increase in financial dependence, increased careermobility, and the overall changed perception of marriage, the divorce rates have increased rapidly since the 1960s and deserve further explanation. The overallfamilystructure has been challenged, and fault lines in American families have widened since the 1960s and the 1970s, which is when the divorce rate doubled.

In the magazine article, " The Pursuit of Autonomy," Alan Wolfe states that " the family is no longer a haven; all too often a center of dysfunction, it has become one with the heartless world that surrounds it. " While this

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statement may be a slight exaggeration of the family perception, reasons remain for the rapid increase of 30 percent in the divorce rate since the 1960s. Discussed in Barbara LeBay's article, " American Families Are Drifting Apart," there are supposedly four main societal changes that occurred in the 1960s, which have greatly impacted today's traditional family structures in America.

Such societal changes include the sexual revolution, women's liberation movement, states' relaxation of divorce laws, and mobility of American families and are said to be responsible for many of our family alienations. During this time frame, society's youth fled from the confines of family, while other family members sought to keep them close and as a result, it is said that there were most likely more problematic issues between children and parents during the 1960s and early 1970s than ever before.

More importantly, the women's liberation movement in the workplace played a large role in changing the values and perceptions of family structure in America. Before this time, men were the assumed leader of each household and were given the largest responsibility of advancing in their careers to make a living, while women were for the most part financially dependent upon them. However, starting in the 1960s women with a college degree could live independently and establish a life for themselves.

There was a new recognition in society that civil rights meant equal rights for everyone, including women (243 Finsterbursch). Women sought sexual equality, which included a wider range of career opportunities and promotions that were once available only to men. By having this form of financial independence, women also had more of the freedom to break away

from destructive or unhappy marriages. Although this movement is an important and productive one, it also impacted the traditional notions of marriage.

Marriage had suddenly become a “ choice,” rather than a “ necessity,” and the entire concept of divorce became less of an issue. Another great change during this time period was the increase in mobility of families in which many family members were no longer living in the same household with one another. Men and women began to move to wherever they could advance in the corporate ladder in the shortest amount of time. Despite how far it was from where they grew up, college students took more jobs away from home, jeopardizing family unity.

People needed to invest lots of time and energy to recreate their lives without the support of their family with these relocations, and still today many are willing to sacrifice their family relationships in order to advance in their careers. Barbara Lebay makes the important point that strangely, the more financially independent people become, the more families scatter and grow apart and tolerance levels decrease as their financial means increase (1 Lebay).

In relation to this observation, Joseph Ducanto makes a similar point about the financial effects of divorce on poverty, along with the idea that while fixing the divorce system will not eliminate the future of poverty, certain changes can help to bring the problem into an easier resolution. In the article, “ Divorce and Poverty are Often Synonymous,” there is praise for the concept of prenuptial agreements due to the fact that in recent years,

prenuptial agreements have been adopted by many states of the Uniform Premarital Agreement Act.

The adoption of this Act is said to “ significantly strengthen the legal basis for acceptance and enforcement of these agreements within marital proceedings” (90 Ducanto). In today’s society, the need and importance of prenuptial agreements signifies our priority of finances being a common theme to marriage termination. Often times, who makes the money in the family and just how much can determine whether a marriage will stay together or not, an issue that was not common before the 1960s. The accumulation of marriage and divorce laws over the years are also said to have affected our increasing divorce rates.

Since the 1970’s, all states have had access to what are called “ no-fault divorces,” with the only real restriction being a waiting time limit of a few months to a year. The motivation for this concept came from the movement of people who felt this would benefit women and children who were stuck in verbally or physically abusive marriages. However, in Steven Nock’s article, “ America’s Divorce Problem,” he discusses that many believe that the facility of this idea has also created somewhat of a “ divorce culture” to the United States in which the traditional sanctions of marriage are no longer respected as much.

Others also disapprove of the no-fault divorce saying that it often leaves women dependent, harms the interest of the children, and deteriorates the general social welfare (1 Nock). Although I personally have not grown up in a divorced household, I sought to understand why so many other people have,

and in turn possibly gain knowledge to avoid becoming a part of the divorced population as well.

With varying symptoms such as the feminist movement in the 1960s, an increase in financial dependence, increased career mobility, and the overall changed perception of marriage, the divorce rates have increased rapidly since the 1960s and 1970s. During this time, there came the beginning of what some would describe as a "divorce culture" for America in which divorce was not seen as such a serious matter, with even the electing our first divorced President of the United States, Ronald Regan.

Although events and movements of this era such as women's empowerment in the workplace are very important to history, they have also impacted the traditional notions of marriage. Marriage has become a "choice," rather than a "necessity," and the entire concept of divorce is much less of an issue.

This new attitude on divorce has clearly prevailed to current times and will hopefully correct itself throughout more changes in events to our society.

Works Cited Ducanto, Joseph N. "Divorce and Poverty Are Often Synonymous. *American Journal of Family Law* 24. 2 (2010): 87-94. AcademicSearch Premier. EBSCO. Web. 19 Apr. 2011. Finsterbusch, Kurt. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Social Issues*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2011. Print. LeBey, Barbara. "American Families Are Drifting Apart." *USA Today Magazine* 130. 2676 (2001): 20. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. Web. 20 Apr. 2011. Nock, Steven L. "America's Divorce Problem." *Society* 36. 4 (1999): 43-52. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. Web. 19 Apr. 2011.