

**\*\* PRESS RELEASE FROM MARRIAGE FOUNDATION / RHODA HARDIE PR \*\***

**\*\* EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 SATURDAY 11 MAY 2019 \*\***

## **Lifetime divorce risk for couples today is lowest since 1960s**

- **The lifetime divorce risk for couples marrying today is 35%.**
- **Of couples who got married since 1963, couples who married in 1986 to 1989 are statistically most likely to divorce, with a 44% lifetime divorce risk.**
- **The lifetime divorce risk has stayed stable at 35% since 2012, after falling steadily since the late 1980s, reflecting the falling divorce rates in the UK – and good news for family stability!**

A new report released today by Marriage Foundation, ahead of **National Marriage Week (13-19 May)**, shows that lifetime divorce risk has risen from 28 per cent for couples who married in 1963, peaking at 44 per cent for couples who married in 1986, falling back down to 35 per cent for couples marrying today.

Data commissioned from the Office for National Statistics was used to map the number of actual divorces that occurred after any duration of marriage onto the year in which those marriages took place, and then to calculate actual and projected divorce rates for each 'year of marriage' since 1963.

Divorce rates peaked between 1982 and 1996 where more than 42 per cent of marriages in any of these years have ended, or will end, in divorce. The worst year in which to marry was 1986, where the cumulative risk is 44 per cent. This estimate is likely to prove extremely accurate as 96 per cent of the 1986 couples who were going to divorce will have already done so. A table of lifetime divorce risks by wedding year 1963 to 2016 is included below.

Sir Paul Coleridge, founder of Marriage Foundation and former high court judge, welcomed the results of this report and what it indicates. *"At the start of Marriage Week 2019, it is really heartening to have such clear evidence that divorce rates have been falling steadily and are now stable. The same is true of marriage rates. The single most important factor in a child's healthy development is the stable relationship of the parents. Informal cohabitation will never offer the same level of family stability as a committed relationship supported by a legal arrangement i.e. marriage. Cohabitation failure rates are three times higher. If only governments could wake up to this evidence which year on year stares them in the face and unequivocally and fearlessly advocate the advantages of marriage a great many of the familiar clichéd social problems we read about would decline. Children, teenagers and the least well off would be the main beneficiaries but we would in fact all benefit."*

*'The huge fall in lifetime divorce risk shows that the current generation of newlyweds is far more serious about their commitment than their parents were,'* added Harry Benson, research director for Marriage Foundation. *'Couples who married in the 1980s and 1990s often did so because social and family pressure encouraged fragile cohabitantes to take the next step before they were ready. That pressure to marry has now disappeared. The result is that today's marriages are as strong as their grandparents were. But while marriage is on an upward trajectory, cohabitation remains as unstable and risky as ever. The next challenge is how to encourage couples who don't marry to become similarly intentional.'*

Full report available at <http://marriagefoundation.org.uk/> or from Harry Benson (07515 699187 / [harry.benson@virgin.net](mailto:harry.benson@virgin.net)) or Rhoda Hardie (0781 542 7111 / [Rhoda.hardie.pr@gmail.com](mailto:Rhoda.hardie.pr@gmail.com)).

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## TABLE OF LIFETIME DIVORCE RISK

WEDDING YEAR	LIFETIME DIVORCE RISK	DIVORCES ALREADY OCCURRED	WEDDING YEAR	LIFETIME DIVORCE RISK	DIVORCES ALREADY OCCURRED	WEDDING YEAR	LIFETIME DIVORCE RISK	DIVORCES ALREADY OCCURRED
1963	28%	100%	1983	43%	97%	2003	40%	66%
1964	30%	100%	1984	43%	99%	2004	39%	61%
1965	31%	100%	1985	43%	96%	2005	38%	57%
1966	32%	100%	1986	44%	96%	2006	38%	52%
1967	33%	100%	1987	44%	95%	2007	37%	46%
1968	33%	100%	1988	44%	94%	2008	36%	40%
1969	35%	100%	1989	44%	93%	2009	36%	35%
1970	35%	100%	1990	42%	92%	2010	36%	29%
1971	36%	100%	1991	44%	92%	2011	36%	25%
1972	35%	99%	1992	43%	90%	2012	35%	16%
1973	37%	99%	1993	43%	89%	2013	35%	10%
1974	38%	99%	1994	43%	87%	2014	35%	5%
1975	38%	99%	1995	43%	86%	2015	35%	2%
1976	39%	99%	1996	42%	84%	2016	35%	0%
1977	41%	99%	1997	42%	82%			
1978	41%	99%	1998	41%	80%			
1979	42%	98%	1999	41%	78%			
1980	41%	99%	2000	40%	74%			
1981	42%	98%	2001	41%	72%			
1982	43%	99%	2002	41%	69%			

### Notes to editors

To discuss interviews, please contact Harry Benson on 07515 699187 / [harry.benson@virgin.net](mailto:harry.benson@virgin.net) or Rhoda Hardie on 0781 542 7111 / [Rhoda.hardie.pr@gmail.com](mailto:Rhoda.hardie.pr@gmail.com).

### 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.

A source of statistics on marriage, cohabitation, commitment, divorce and family breakdown can be found on the Marriage Foundation website: <http://marriagefoundation.org.uk/>