

# MARRIAGE IN UTAH



2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce

A Project of the Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage and Utah State University Extension.

## Foreword

Brent A. Barlow, Ph.D., Chair  
Governor's Commission on Marriage

In 1998, Governor Michael O. Leavitt and First Lady, Jacalyn S. Leavitt launched the nation's first Governor's Commission on Marriage with the overarching goal of strengthening marriages in Utah. The marriage unit is the most fundamental unit of society, and if the bond of marriage weakens, so does our society, including the rising generation. It is widely recognized that a healthy, loving marriage not only provides great personal happiness, it also creates the safest place for children to thrive and benefit from the full emotional, moral, educational, and financial benefits that two married parents can provide. Therefore, we are committed to promoting efforts that will help couples develop and strengthen a healthy marriage relationship. These efforts include a state marriage website ([www.UtahMarriage.org](http://www.UtahMarriage.org)), a free online marriage course, relationship instruction in high schools, premarital education for engaged couples, and marriage enrichment for newlyweds and other couples. Additionally, we are dedicated to supporting single-parent families and applaud their efforts in raising a strong generation of children.

Following the release of the groundbreaking 2001 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce in Oklahoma, we felt a need to conduct a similar survey in Utah. The subsequent results will help guide our efforts in accomplishing our goals of implementing ways to promote and strengthen marriage, as well as increase awareness of the importance of marriage to our state's well-being. This report provides the highlights of the 2003 Utah Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce prepared by researchers at Utah State University, in connection with Oklahoma's Bureau for Social Research.

We believe the results from this survey are invaluable and provide optimism for the following reasons:

- The survey data is current and provides a picture of the attitudes and marital events that are taking place right now in Utah.
- The survey data help us to identify the many strengths regarding marriage in Utah, in addition to specifying areas we can focus on for improvement. This allows for a more tailored approach to marriage education that is specific to Utahns.
- The findings include comprehensive information regarding opinions and attitudes concerning Utah's low-income population and how we can better serve them.
- The findings explore the attitudes and behaviors of the rising generation of younger adults. This key group of adults will help pave the future of marriage in Utah.
- Helpful data allow us to better understand the impact mental health plays on the marriage relationship. This seldom-measured variable's impact on marriage will help mental health professionals and others to provide effective services for this population.

This unique survey provides detailed information on marriage and divorce in Utah where national data fall short. Specifically, this survey gives precise representative results of the current status of marriage and divorce in Utah, including marital quality. The findings in this report have implications ranging from programs for marriage education to public policies that support marriage. Perhaps the most compelling finding from these data is that the overwhelming majority of Utahns highly value the essential institution of marriage, and believe that a statewide initiative to strengthen marriage is a good idea. The great task that lies ahead for Utah citizens, faith communities, businesses, organizations, and local government and community leaders is to utilize the findings to develop new and helpful ways to strengthen marriages and families throughout Utah.

Salt Lake City  
October 2003

# Table of Contents

Executive Summary of Key Findings	1
Introduction	4
About the Study	5
Utahns' Attitudes about Marriage, Divorce, and Cohabitation	6
Marital Status, Divorce Reasons, and Quality of Relationships in Utah	9
Policies and Programs: Utahns' Opinions, Use, and Interest	20
Low-Income Adults in Utah	24
Impact of Mental Health and Substance Abuse on Relationships in Utah	27
Summary and Implications for Education	29
Appendix A. Methodology of the Study	32
Appendix B. Comparison Tables of Selected Utah and Oklahoma Findings	34

# Marriage in Utah: Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce

## Executive Summary of Key Findings

This study employed a statewide sample of 1,316 adults, 18 years of age or older. Data were collected between February and April 2003.

### Marriage and Divorce:

- Utahns marry an average of 3.5 years younger (Utah men—23.0, women—21.0) than the national median age (U.S. men—26.6, women—24.5) at first marriage.
- This sample of Utahns has considered divorce less often and has divorced less often, compared to the nation.
  - Eighteen percent (18%) of all Utah adults in this sample have ever-divorced compared to 21% nationally.
  - A lower percentage of currently-married Utahns in this sample have thought about divorce (31%) when compared to married adults from a national sample (42%).
  - Utah adults marrying under the age of 20 were the most likely to have experienced a divorce, when compared to other age categories.
  - Setting aside gender and income level, this sample of divorced Utahns were most likely to give the following five reasons for their divorces:
    - A lack of commitment (83%)
    - Too much conflict and arguing (53%)
    - Infidelity or extramarital affairs (52%)
    - Getting married too young (41%)
    - Financial problems or economic hardship (33%)

### Marital Quality:

- Consistent with fewer thoughts about divorce, and less divorce among adults in Utah than in the nation, married Utahns in this sample were more likely to be very happy (74%) than married couples nationally (62%).
  - Among married persons, the happiest people were also more likely to report:
    - Higher levels of overall commitment to their spouse
    - More frequent dating and talking as friends
    - Less frequent conflict and negative communication
  - The biggest discriminator, between couples who were satisfied and those who were not, was negative interaction.
- Fifty-four percent (54%) of respondents considered themselves “very religious”. Further, those who reported they were very religious—and particularly those who attended religious services most frequently—reported higher levels of marital satisfaction, higher levels of commitment, less-frequent conflicts, and a lower likelihood of having thought about divorce.
- Overall, men and women showed few gender differences in their ratings of marital satisfaction, commitment, or feeling trapped in their marriages.
- Nearly half (47%) of all the married respondents thought their marriages might have been in trouble at some point compared to 42% nationally. Of these people, 94% said they were glad they were still together.
- Among respondents who have experienced a divorce, 31% of men and 13% of women wished they had worked harder to save their marriage. Conversely, 74% of the men and 65% of the women wished that their *spouse* had worked harder to save their marriage.

### Nonmarital or Premarital Cohabitation:

- Cohabitation outside of marriage is rejected by most Utahns in this sample, however:
  - Sixteen percent (16%) of currently married respondents lived together prior to marriage compared to

- 53% nationally.
- Thirty-three percent (33%) believed it was acceptable for a man and woman to live together without marriage, with men (38%) more likely than women (27%) to agree.
- Although most Utahns (60%) did not agree with the perception that living together outside of marriage has all the rewards of marriage without the legal details, 29% believed nonmarital cohabitation had all the benefits of marriage.
- Whereas 62% of those who were cohabiting believed that their parents approved of their living together, only 14% believed that their parents disapproved.
- On average, those who lived with their spouses prior to marriage reported lower levels of marital satisfaction, commitment, and religiosity; higher levels of negative interaction; and greater tendencies to be thinking and talking about divorce, compared to those couples who did not live together prior to marriage.

### Attitudes About Marriage and Divorce:

- Ninety-two percent (92%) of the respondents believe divorce is a very serious or somewhat serious national problem.
- Younger-age groups (18-24 years of age) expressed less confidence in the institution of marriage than older age groups (45-64 years of age). However, overall, young people held optimistic views of marriage over cohabitation. Most (80%) of the younger Utahns surveyed believed that a spouse might be relied on more than a cohabiting partner and 58% believed a couple should be married before having children together.

### Fathers, Mothers, and Children of Divorce:

- Seventy-five percent (75%) of the ever-divorced Utah respondents have a child from a previous marriage.
- The majority of divorced parents (59%) with nonresident children reported feeling very close to their children. They also indicated they were satisfied with their relationship with these children.
  - Fifty-three percent (53%) of nonresident parents were “very satisfied” with their relationships with their children, 26% were “somewhat satisfied”, and 21% were “not satisfied.”

### Views on Prevention Policies and Programs:

- Ninety-two percent (92%) of those responding believed it was very important or somewhat important for couples to prepare for marriage through educational classes, workshops, or counseling designed to get them off to a good start.
- Among currently married respondents, 27% participated in premarital preparation, such as educational classes, workshops, or counseling, prior to marrying. More recently-married persons were more likely to have participated in premarital education, with 39% of those married within the past seven years having participated in premarital preparation.
- Of the respondents who participated in premarital education with their spouses, 84% indicated they were “very happy”, compared to 71% of those who did not participate in premarital education. Additionally, those who participated in premarital education had higher commitment scores, higher overall satisfaction scores, lower divorce proneness scores, and were less likely to feel trapped in their marriage.
- Of those who had marriage preparation, 67% reported it took place in a religious setting, with others getting their marriage education in settings such as workshops, counseling, and other classes.
- Overall, 75% of respondents said they would consider using relationship education to strengthen their relationship or marriage, with a higher percentage of ever-divorced persons (75%) reporting they would than persons who had never been divorced (70%), and an even higher percentage of those receiving government financial assistance (TANF) (81%) saying they would consider such services. Seventy-five percent (75%) of never-married persons also indicated they would consider using relationship education.
- Eighty-seven percent (87%) of Utah respondents believed that a statewide initiative to promote marriage and reduce divorce was a good or very good idea.
- Fifty-eight percent (58%) of those surveyed believed society would be better off if divorces were more difficult to obtain, and an equally high percentage of ever-divorced persons (55%) believed this.
- Four percent (4%) of all Utah adults surveyed said they had accessed at least one of the Governor’s Marriage Commissions’ resources, such as conferences, the video for newlyweds, or the website on marriage.

## Low-income Utahns:

- Low-income adults (those who were eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF) expressed more interest in obtaining relationship education (83%) than adults in the sample of the general population surveyed (74%).
- Forty-four percent (44%) of low-income Utahns believed a spouse could be relied on more than a cohabiting partner, compared to 79% of the general sample of Utahns surveyed.
- Fewer low-income Utahns (29%) believed that couples who had children together should be married, compared to 70% for the general sample of Utahns.
- Three out of four (75%) low-income Utahns believed that non-marital cohabitation was acceptable, compared to only 33% of the general sample.
- More low-income Utahns (37%) have ever cohabited, compared to the general sample of Utahns (19%).
- Seventy-eight percent (78%) of low-income Utahns who were not married thought they would lose some of their government assistance if they married.
- Low-income Utahns were more likely to have been divorced (23%) than Utahns in the general sample (16%).
- Among low-income Utahns, 12% of married respondents were “not very satisfied” or “not at all satisfied” with their marriage relationship, compared to 1% of the general sample of Utahns.

## Mental Health and Substance Abuse in Utah:

- There were statistically significant differences in levels of marital happiness ( $p < .01$ ) and marital satisfaction ( $p < .01$ ) between Utahns who have and who have not experienced depression, with respondents who have not experienced depression showing overall higher levels.
- There were statistically significant differences in levels of marital happiness ( $p < .01$ ) and marital satisfaction ( $p < .01$ ) between Utahns who have and who have not experienced alcohol or drug problems.
  - Alcohol and drugs have a major negative impact on Utah’s marriages. Only 37% of Utahns who have experienced alcohol or drug problems indicated they were in “very happy” marriages, compared to 76% of those who have not experienced problems with drugs or alcohol.
  - Thirty-two percent (32%) of the general sample of Utahns and 54% of low-income Utahns indicated alcohol and drugs were a problem in their current marriages/relationships.
- Although many Utahns, like their national counterparts, have experienced mental health problems, low-income Utahns have statistically significantly higher rates of anxiety (43%), depression (51%), alcohol or drug problems (19%), and other mental health conditions (10%) than the general sample of Utahns.

# Marriage in Utah: Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce

## Introduction

### Understanding Marriage in Utah

In September of 1998, Utah's Governor Michael Leavitt and First Lady Jacalyn Leavitt organized the nation's first Governor's Commission on Marriage. The primary purpose of this commission was to recommend and implement ways to promote and strengthen marriage, for those who choose marriage for themselves, and increase awareness of the importance of marriage to our state's well-being. In 2003, the Governor's Commission on Marriage, in partnership with Utah State University, contracted with Oklahoma State University's Bureau for Social Research to replicate the groundbreaking Oklahoma statewide, study on marriage and divorce<sup>1</sup>. The Oklahoma Marriage Initiative and Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce was a pioneering effort on a statewide level to reduce divorce rates and, ultimately, generate effective welfare reform. This current parallel report describes critical research findings, the implications of which may impact Utah's marriage programs and services, and influence future policies in Utah.

Traditionally, Utah has been distinguished for its characteristically strong marriages and families. Recent data, based on national figures, ranks Utah as having the fewest births to unwed mothers<sup>2</sup> (17.2 per 1,000 total population), while at the same time having the highest birthrate in the nation<sup>3</sup> (21.2 per 1,000 total population). Utah also has the fewest number of single-parent households (7.7%), the highest number of married-couple households (63.2%), and ranks highest in the number of family households<sup>4</sup> (76.3%). Despite this, Utah's divorce rate of 4.4 per 1,000 population is slightly higher than the national average of 4.0<sup>5</sup>. Thus, it is recognized that Utah, like other states, has the critical need to strengthen marriage and family relationships.

In recent years, there has been a greater emphasis on preventing divorce and strengthening marriages, particularly in low-income families, since the individual and societal consequences of divorce among low-income families can be more far-reaching. One of the goals of the current study was to accurately capture the attitudes and opinions of Utah's low-income population. Previous research suggests that low-income marriages have a higher risk of dissolution, possibly due to the stressful life circumstances that accompany poverty. Further, the costs to society of divorce among low-income families appear to be immediate and more urgent than those generated by divorce among higher-income families.

### Utah's Marriage-Strengthening Efforts

Generally, proposed solutions to marital problems are grounded in assumptions or data regarding the sources of the problems. Before structured and effective marriage-strengthening efforts can be undertaken, it is of vital importance to establish a baseline regarding the current trends and attitudes towards marriage, divorce, and other relationships. National figures and government statistics have limited applicability to individual states. Attitudes, beliefs, and marital quality are rarely collected for vital statistics reports. It was concluded that Utah marriage-strengthening efforts must be based specifically on current data for Utah. Thus, the 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce was conducted in an effort to find out where we are and to make decisions about the directions and paths we need to pursue in our marriage-strengthening efforts.

Policymakers and researchers are beginning to suggest that strengthening marriage improves child outcomes on a variety of levels. However, because of its relative novelty, this approach has faced several obstacles. At the most fundamental level, there is a lack of research examining whether this approach is effective in improving outcomes for families at risk of experiencing divorce and marital disruption. Consequently, Utah and other states are taking positive, yet tentative and cautious, steps in the direction of strengthening marriages.

One unique addition in the Utah Marriage study is the section about mental health issues and their relationship to marriage. Perhaps one overlooked contributor to overall well-being in relationships is the impact of mental health

on relationship quality. The occurrence of mental health conditions, such as anxiety, depression, and drug or alcohol problems, as well as their impact on current or prior relationships was assessed.

It is important to note that the aim of the marriage-strengthening efforts in Utah is not to condemn divorced people or single parents, but to know how to enhance their family-building efforts. It is recognized that many single parents do a remarkable job of raising children in what are often difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, high divorce rates and increases in children being born out-of-wedlock continue to cause worry. Research continually supports the notion that children living with both biological parents have better cognitive and emotional development and higher school achievement than children living with single parents<sup>6</sup>.

Utah has already made strides to improve the current marriage climate. In April 2001, the Governor's Commission on Marriage received TANF funds to pilot test a handful of projects. A marriage website ([www.UtahMarriage.org](http://www.UtahMarriage.org)) was created to provide current research-based information to individuals and couples who desire information on maintaining and strengthening the bond of marriage. A marriage video was also produced and distributed to all couples applying for a marriage license at county courthouses across the state. Annual marriage conferences are held around the state where marriage-skills training and workshops are presented with the intent of strengthening marriage and family relationships. A Utah Newlywed Study was carried out, assessing over 1,000 newlywed couples' marriage preparation, problem areas in relationships, and marital satisfaction during this often-fragile first year of marriage. Subsequent results from this study were used to create a free online marriage preparation and marriage enrichment course targeted specifically at engaged and newlywed couples.

What follows is a report on the survey data that have been collected in Utah, similar to Oklahoma's groundbreaking initial report. The aim of this report is to present an extensive understanding of the current state of marriage and family relationships in Utah, including implications for education, programs, and research efforts for Utah and the nation. Additional surveys and reports in the state on specific subjects, and/or replications of this study in future years, may be forthcoming. As with the Oklahoma study, the findings from this report have implications for marriage education and potential policy changes. These will be addressed in the concluding sections of this report.

## About the Study

### Purpose of the Study:

This research project was conducted in an effort to measure Utahns' attitudes and behaviors related to marriage, divorce, and cohabitation. It is a replication of the groundbreaking Oklahoma Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce conducted by the Bureau for Social Research (BSR) at Oklahoma State University. Key findings and information will be used to inform the Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage and the Department of Workforce Services in their efforts to promote strong and healthy marriages in Utah.

The 2003 Utah Marriage Statewide Baseline Survey had two basic objectives. The first objective: determine how respondents felt about marriage, divorce, and marriage education. The second objective: collect information on the respondents' own marital/relationship history and current status. This included: 1) attitudes about intimate relationships, marriage/divorce, and family; 2) quantitative data on couples' relationship quality; 3) family involvement/support for marriage; 4) knowledge and acceptance of marriage education; 5) demographic data on patterns of cohabitation, intent to marry, marriage, divorce, and remarriage among Utah residents (i.e., marriage and divorce history); 6) data on other variables of interest, such as religious involvement, utilization of government services, mental health conditions, and other demographic data.

The findings in this report are based on telephone interviews conducted from February to April 2003 with a statewide sample of 1,316 Utah adults. The sample consists of 1,186 interviews using a random household sample. An additional 130 interviews were completed with a random sample of people currently receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds. Based on the total sample, as well as weighting of the data to make it representative of Utah's actual population, one can say with 95% confidence, that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 2.67 percentage points. Every effort has been made to make this report accurate and representative of the people of Utah, but some caution in interpreting the findings is still advised.

### Definition of “Low-income” as Used in This Report:

For purposes of this report, low-income adults are defined as persons who are currently receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) from the government. This definition was chosen, as opposed to persons who have ever received government assistance, because it is possible that individuals and/or their parents, who at one time received government assistance, are no longer considered low-income. Low-income Utahns receiving TANF funds are of particular interest when it comes to considering marriage and family policies for Utah.

### Understanding the Meaning of “Average”:

It is important to keep in mind that summaries of research findings, including key differences between groups, are usually observed differences. This means there will be many exceptions to the “average” finding. For example, even though Utahns marry an average of 3.5 years younger than the national average, there are some Utahns who get married later than the national average. When viewing trends and considering policies that will affect people’s lives, an understanding of average differences is crucial, but it is advisable to keep in mind that many Utah adults will not fit the “average”.

### Organization of This Report:

The remainder of this report is organized into six sections: 1) “Utahns’ Attitudes About Marriage, Divorce, and Cohabitation”. 2) “Marital Status, Divorce Reasons, and Quality of Relationships in Utah” includes an in-depth assessment of the quality of relationships in Utah and contains a description of Utahns’ current marital or relationship status. It also looks at Utahns’ reasons for divorce; beliefs about childbearing, childrearing, and parent-child relationships; and the quality of intimate relationships in Utah. 3) “Policies and Programs: Utahns’ Opinions, Use, and Interest” describes the opinions and attitudes of Utahns on programs and policies pertaining to marriage, divorce, premarital preparation, and relationship education. This section also contains a description of Utahns’ awareness of and use of existing prevention services, educational programs, and resources developed by the Governor’s Commission on Marriage. 4) “Low-Income Adults in Utah” provides a description of attitudes, behaviors and needs of low-income families. 5) “Impact of Mental Health and Substance Abuse on Relationships in Utah” describes the frequency of mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and drug and alcohol use, and how these conditions affect Utahns’ relationships. 6) “Summary and Implications for Education”. Appendix A, “Methodology of the Study” describes how the study was conducted. Appendix B, “Utah/Oklahoma Comparison Tables” provides a list of tables comparing Utah and Oklahoma data for selected characteristics.

## Utahns’ Attitudes about Marriage, Divorce, and Cohabitation

While the majority of Utahns value the institution of marriage, many were accepting of alternatives, including cohabitation and divorce.

### Most Utahns consider divorce to be a serious problem.

The great majority of Utah respondents (91%) thought divorce was a serious problem. Sixty-two percent (62%) viewed it as a very serious problem, while another 29% considered it a somewhat serious problem.

### Utahns held diverse views on mandating longer waiting periods before granting a divorce.

While 64% of adults in Utah thought that longer waiting periods before granting a divorce would give people time to get over their anger, work out their problems, and reconcile, 25% disagreed/strongly disagreed with this idea.

### Utahns thought marriage should come before children.

Seven in ten adults in Utah (70%) agreed/strongly agreed that people who have children together should be married. However, 23% believed that marriage need not be a precursor for having children. Seven percent (7%) of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

### Sexual fidelity in marriage remains a fundamental principle among Utahns.

The vast majority of persons in Utah (96%) believed it was wrong to have sex with someone other than their spouse.

A notable majority of Utahns thought couples rushed into marriage, focusing too much on their own immediate happiness.

Most Utahns (96%) believed that young couples focused too much on the happiness they expected from marriage and not enough on the hard work required for a successful marriage. Subsequently, 83% of Utah adults thought too many couples rush into marriage.

Utahns had mixed views on whether married couples with children should divorce.

While most Utahns (58%) agreed that parents should divorce if they do not get along, 63% also believed parents with children should stay married even if they no longer love each other (see Table 1). Sixty-six percent (66%) of women compared to 51% of men believed that parents should divorce if they do not get along.

**Table 1. Responses to two items pertaining to whether parents with children should divorce.**

	When married people realize they no longer love each other, they should get a divorce even if they have children.	When there are children in the family, parents should stay married even if they don't get along.
Strongly agree	5%	4%
Agree	22%	27%
Neither agree/disagree	10%	10%
Disagree	42%	48%
Strongly disagree	22%	10%

Many Utahns thought a bad marriage was worse than a divorce.

Sixty-three percent (63%) of Utahns agreed that a bad marriage was worse than a divorce, but 29% disagreed with this statement.

Utahns held mixed views on whether divorces should be harder to obtain.

While most Utahns (58%) agreed/strongly agreed that society would be better off if divorces were harder to get, nearly one-third (32%) disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement. Of the respondents who have been divorced, 55% agreed/strongly agreed that society would be better off if divorces were harder to get, and 38% disagreed/strongly disagreed with this idea.

Majority of Utahns (61%) believed premarital cohabitation was unacceptable.

While the majority of respondents (61%) indicated they thought it was improper for a man and woman to live together before marriage, one-third (33%) of Utahns believed that it was acceptable to live together without being married. Men were more likely (38%) than women (27%) to accept this type of living arrangement.

Moreover, one-fourth (25%) of Utahns believed that living together prior to marriage improved their chances for a good marriage. A similar percent of men (26%) and women (24%) believed that living together could be beneficial to marital success. Sixty-four percent (64%) disagreed with this statement.

Additionally, while six out of ten adults in Utah (60%) disagreed that couples who live together outside of marriage get all the benefits of marriage without the legal details, a notable number, 29% of Utah adults, believed that living together outside of marriage was as beneficial as getting married.

Young couples held mixed views about marriage, divorce, and cohabitation.

The majority of young people under the age of 25, believed that a man and woman should not have a child before marriage (58%), should not live together outside of marriage (54%), and did not believe that living together improves their chances for a good marriage (55%).

Young people in Utah were nearly as likely to view divorce as a serious problem (87%) compared with people 25 years old and older (95%). Nearly half (49%) of young people thought divorce was a “very” serious problem.

Compared to persons between 25-44 years of age, persons under the age of 25 were more likely to believe that a spouse can be counted on more than a cohabiting partner. Among persons under the age of 25, 80% agreed/strongly agreed that in marriage you can count on your spouse being there for you, more than you can when you are living with someone outside of marriage. This was only slightly less (74%) for respondents between 25-44 years of age.

Furthermore, respondents under age 25 were less likely to agree that couples living together outside of marriage get all the benefits of marriage without the legal details, compared with those 25 years old or older: 65% under age 25 compared to 54% of those 25 years old or older.

Although the majority (58%) of 18-25 year-old respondents believed a couple should be married prior to having children, a notable number, 31%, disagreed with this statement (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Percent of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed that people who have children together ought to be married, by age categories.**

	Age categories			
People who have children together ought to be married	18-24 years old	25-44 years old	45-64 years old	65 and over
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	31%	27%	14%	5%

Utahns under the age of 25 were more likely to approve of cohabitation: 40% of those ages 18-24, 37% of those ages 25-44, 28% of those ages 45-64, and 10% of those 65 and over believed living together outside of marriage was acceptable. Similarly, the younger the people were, the more likely they were to believe that living together before marriage would be likely to improve their chances for a good marriage (see Table 3). However, the majority (65%) of all Utahns surveyed disagreed that living together before marriage improves the chances for a good marriage.

**Table 3. Percent of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that cohabitation will improve the chances for a good marriage, by age categories.**

	Age categories			
People who live together before marriage are likely to improve their chances for a good marriage	18-24 years old	25-44 years old	45-64 years old	65 and over
Agree/Strongly Agree	36%	25%	17%	9%

**Summary of Utahns’ Attitudes about Marriage, Divorce, and Cohabitation:**

While the majority of Utahns surveyed believe divorce is a national problem, many also believed there were certain acceptable conditions for divorce. Most adults in Utah believed a bad marriage was worse than a divorce; some believed not being in love anymore, not getting along, particularly when there were children in the home, were acceptable reasons for divorce. It appears the real problem for Utahns is the difficulty in maintaining happy marriages.

Most Utahns believe married couples with children should stay married for the children’s sake, up to a certain point. However, if this “threshold” includes frequent or overt conflict, even abuse, most Utahns believe a couple should divorce rather than expose children to high levels of destructive conflict.

Men and women often had differing views about marriage, divorce, and cohabitation. For men, it was more acceptable to live together with someone you love without being married. Additionally, if married people realized they no longer loved each other, men, more often than women, believed they should get a divorce even if they have children. However, a higher percentage of women than men agreed that parents should divorce if they do not get along. Women also agreed more often that society would be better off if divorces were harder to get. Thus, more men believe that if the love dies, it is okay to divorce, whereas women more often tend to believe staying together only for the sake of the children is not a good idea if they are not getting along with their husband. It must be noted here that in cases of various forms of abuse, divorce may be the best option, and each individual must make that personal decision.

The majority of Utahns ages 18-25 were relatively optimistic about marriage, and less accepting of divorce and alternatives to marriage. Although a growing number of young people were more accepting of divorce and cohabitation than older generations, they also held stronger and more conservative views on many issues when compared to many older adults. However, if current trends continue, we might expect more young people to live together before marriage, to have children outside of marriage, and perhaps see an increase in the rate of divorce.

## Marital Status, Divorce Reasons, and Quality of Relationships in Utah

### Marriage and Relationship Behaviors:

Nearly 60% of adult Utah respondents were currently married.

When asked to report their current marital status, 59% of Utah respondents reported that they were currently married, 4% were widowed, 8% were currently divorced, 1% were separated, and 28% reported they had never been married. Table 4 compares the marital status of Utah adults to the national average for all U.S. citizens 15 years of age and older. However, it must be noted that data were only collected for Utahns ages 18 and over.

**Table 4. Marital Status of Utahns compared to all U.S. citizens.**

Marital Status	Utah	United States
Married	59%	54%
Widowed	4%	7%
Divorced	8%	10%
Separated	1%	3%
Never Married	28%	27%

The majority of Utahns (72%) reported being married at least once.

Among adults in the United States, 73%<sup>7</sup> reported being married at least once. For Utahns in this sample, the figure was 72% (this figure may be lower due to the fact Utah has the second-youngest population in the United States). Table 5 shows the number of marriages reported by adults in Utah. The “never married” category appears relatively high and may be attributed to the fact that 14% of the respondents were between 18-20 years of age, indicating that the Utah sample includes many young persons who may, as yet, not be married.

**Table 5. Number of marriages for all adults, in percent.**

Number of Marriages	Percent of Utahns
0	32%
1	55%
2	11%
3	2%
More than 3	<1%

Among Utah respondents who have ever-divorced and remarried, 9% have married the same person more than once. Utahns sometimes divorce and then marry the same spouse again. Respondents who had been married more than once were asked whether they had ever-married the same person more than once. Nine percent (9%) indicated they had married the same person more than once.

Utahns marry at a younger age than the national average.

For Utahns married 10 years or less, the median age for first marriages among adult men was 23.0 years of age, while the median age for adult women was 21.0 years of age. During the past 10 years, the average median age of first marriages for men nationally was 26.6 while the average median age of first marriages for women nationally was 24.5. Table 6 shows that adult Utahns marry about 3.5 years younger than the national average<sup>8</sup>.

**Table 6. Median age at first marriage, by gender.**

Median age at first marriage – Utah survey data		
	Men	Women
Married 3 years or less	23	21
Married 5 years or less	23	21
Married 10 years or less	23	21
Median age at first marriage – U.S. data		
	Men	Women
Married in 2000	26.8	25.1
Married in 1995	26.9	24.5
Married in 1990	26.1	23.9

Using data taken from the General Social Survey of persons in the United States, Table 7 shows that more ever-married Utahns are married before age 20 than the national average.

**Table 7. Age at first marriage, ever-married persons age 18 and older, in percent.**

Age at first marriage	Utah, 2003	U.S., 1990-1994
<20	41%	28%
20-23	37%	38%
24-27	17%	21%
28+	5%	13%

Among all adult Utahns from this sample, 18% have been divorced.

Table 8 compares the national estimate of United States citizens who have ever been divorced<sup>9</sup> (21%) to Utahns who have ever been divorced (18%).

**Table 8. Percent of all adults ever-divorced, Utahns compared to U.S. citizens generally.**

	Utah, 2003	U.S.
Percent of all adults who have ever been divorced	18%	21%

Among ever-married Utahn respondents, 14% have been divorced once, while 4% have been divorced more than once (see Table 9). Among adult Utahns who have been divorced, 76% had children from a previous marriage, suggesting that a large number of children are also being impacted by divorce in Utah.

**Table 9. Number of divorces for all adults, in percent.**

Number of divorces	Percent of Utahns
0	82%
1	14%
2	3%
3	1%
more than 3	<1% (n=3)

Utah marriages that ultimately end in divorce have lasted longer than the national average.

Among Utahns who have been married and are currently divorced, the average duration of that marriage was 13.61 years and the median length of the marriage was 9 years, compared with the national median length of marriage, which is 7.85<sup>10</sup> years.

Over one-third (36%) of persons who were not married, but who were involved in a romantic relationship, were currently living together.

Among Utahns who were currently not married, 43% (n=239) reported that they were currently involved in a romantic relationship. Within this group, 36% (n=86) reported that they were cohabiting with their romantic partner, compared with 64% (n=153) who reported that they were not cohabiting with their romantic partner. These results show that among all unmarried adults in Utah, 6% are cohabiting with their romantic partner. Table 10 shows the percentages of non-married Utahns who were currently involved in a romantic relationship and who were cohabiting, by age categories.

**Table 10. Percent of non-married survey respondents currently involved in a romantic relationship and cohabiting (total n=86), by age categories.**

	Age categories			
	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+
Non-married, romantically involved, and currently cohabiting	31%	46%	21%	75% (n=4)

Among Utahns who were currently cohabiting, 10% report that they were engaged when they began cohabiting. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the individuals who reported they were currently living with their romantic partner believed that their parents approved of them living together, 15% believed that their parents disapproved, while 15% believed their parents were either neutral or had mixed feelings about the issue.

Sixteen percent (16%) of responding Utahns who were currently married reported that they cohabited with their spouse before marriage. This is dramatically lower than the national figure of 53% cohabiting prior to marriage<sup>11</sup>. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of Utahns who lived together prior to marriage reported they were engaged when they began cohabiting. Forty-five percent (45%) of this group believed that their parents approved of their living together before marriage; 36% believed their parents disapproved, while 10% believed their parents were either neutral or had mixed feelings about them living together before marriage.

Table 11 reveals, by age category, the percentage of married persons living in Utah who cohabited with their current spouse before they were married. The results indicated that younger people in Utah (ages 18-24) were more likely than any other age group to cohabit with their romantic partner before marriage.

**Table 11. Percent of married persons who lived with their current spouse prior to marriage, by age categories.**

	Age categories			
	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+
Cohabited prior to current marriage	24%	16%	19%	4%

These results show that cohabiting with a partner before marriage or cohabiting without marriage is a growing trend in Utah that reflects the growing trend in the nation. When those who lived together before marriage were asked if their parents approved or disapproved of them living together before marriage, 34% responded that their parents disapproved, 33% responded that their parents approved, and 20% responded that their parents were neutral.

A summary of the findings in this section of the Utah Marriage Survey indicate that a higher percentage of Utahns are currently married and a lower percentage of them have been divorced when compared to the national average. The marriages of Utahns who divorce have lasted longer than the national average and Utahns also marry at a younger age than the national average. Cohabitation is a growing trend in Utah that reflects this growing trend nationally.

### Utahns’ Opinions of Their Own Divorces:

**Lack of commitment was cited as the top reason for Utahns’ divorces.**

Utahns who were divorced said a lack of commitment was the major contributor to their divorce. Specifically, the Utah Marriage Survey asked Utahns who had been divorced to answer the following:

“There are many reasons why marriages fail. I’m going to read a list of possible reasons. Looking back at your most recent divorce, tell me whether or not each factor was a major contributor to your divorce. You can say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to each factor.”

Table 12 shows the reasons respondents gave for their divorces by the percentage of those respondents who answered “yes” to a factor being a major contributor to their divorce.

**Table 12. Reasons for respondents' divorces given in percent indicating factor did contribute to divorce from most frequently endorsed to least frequently endorsed, by gender.**

Reasons for Respondent's Prior Divorce	Men	Women	Mean Percent Indicating "Yes"
Lack of commitment	87%	79%	83%
Too much conflict and arguing	48%	58%	53%
Infidelity or extramarital affairs	47%	56%	52%
Getting married too young	39%	43%	41%
Financial problems or economic hardship	31%	35%	33%
Lack of support from family members	21%	20%	21%
Little or no helpful premarital education	19%	29%	24%
Other	17%	28%	22%
Religious differences between partners	13%	16%	15%
Domestic violence	6%	37%*	22%

\*Differences are statistically significant,  $p < .05$ .

Table 12 clearly reveals what Utahns who have experienced divorce perceive as the major contributing factors to their divorces. The finding that Utahns perceived a lack of commitment as the major contributing factor to their divorces was also found in the Oklahoma Marriage Survey, from which the Utah Marriage Survey was modeled. Concerning this finding, the Oklahoma Marriage Survey reports:

"While it may seem self-evident that issues of commitment come into play when one considers or acts on an intention to divorce, the finding of lack of commitment as the most highly endorsed item was unexpected. Of course, the respondents could have been thinking of many things when considering the concept of commitment. Commitment often involves making one's partner and relationship a priority, investing in the marriage, and having a long-term view of the relationship"<sup>12</sup>

"Too much conflict and arguing" was the second highest contributing factor to divorce reported by Utahns who have experienced a divorce. This finding, in conjunction with 22% of the respondents who reported domestic violence as a contributor to their divorce, suggests that high-conflict marriages in Utah are more susceptible to divorce. "Infidelity or extra marital affairs" were cited by Utahns who have experienced a divorce as having a major impact on their decision to divorce. Infidelity may be a primary factor leading to divorce or it may also be an outcome of one or both partners having already decided to dissolve the marriage.

Many Utahns cited "Getting married too young" as a major contributor to their divorce. Although the survey did not specify any potential correlations between the reasons respondents gave that contributed to their divorce, early age at marriage and financial problems or economic hardships could potentially be related.

Interestingly, the majority of Utahns who cited "other reasons" for their divorce reported that their partner's alcohol and/or drug abuse was behind their decision to divorce. Mental illness was the next most commonly cited issue. Other items reported include a lack of communication, dishonesty, pornography, gambling, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, health issues, cultural differences, a lack of formal education, their age difference, immaturity, and issues surrounding children.

Table 12 also compares the reasons Utah men and women gave as the major contributors to their divorce. The responses by gender were remarkably similar, with the exception of domestic violence. Women were statistically significantly more likely than men to indicate domestic violence as a major contributor to the divorce.

Over three-fourths of divorced persons (78%) believed they worked hard enough to save their marriages and the majority also wished their partners had worked harder.

The large majority of Utahns (78%) who have been divorced believed that they, personally, worked hard enough to save their marriages. However, these same individuals did not believe their partners did enough. When asked if they wished their spouses had worked harder to save the marriage, 74% of the husbands and 65% of the wives said, "Yes".

Husbands were more than twice as likely as wives to believe they, personally, did not work hard enough to save the marriage. Thirty-one percent (31%) of husbands, but only 13% of wives, stated that they wished they, personally, had worked harder to save their marriage. In contrast, more wives (35%) than husbands (26%) believed that their spouse had worked hard enough to save their marriage (see Table 13). These findings persist, even after controlling for age, receipt of premarital education, marital counseling, and government services.

**Table 13. Responses to two items pertaining to working harder to save the marriage, by gender.**

<b>Do you ever wish that you, yourself, had worked harder to save your marriage?</b>	<b>Husbands</b>	<b>Wives</b>
Yes, I wish I would have worked harder	31%	13%
No, I worked hard enough	69%	87%
<b>Do you ever wish that your spouse had worked harder to save your marriage?</b>		
Yes, I wish my spouse had worked harder	74%	65%
No, my spouse worked hard enough	26%	35%

In general, the data presented here indicate fairly similar responses between husbands and wives in terms of who they thought was to blame for the break-up of their marriages. The majority of both husbands and wives felt they had worked hard enough to save their marriages, while at the same time wishing their spouse had worked harder. In short, both husbands and wives seemed to accuse each other of not working hard enough to save the marriage, while minimizing their own responsibility. Perhaps a strong propensity for each spouse to focus on their partner's faults, rather than on their personal responsibility in the marriage, was a contributor to the distress in those marriages that ended in divorce. It is interesting to note that husbands are quite a bit more likely than wives to hold themselves personally responsible for not working as hard as they could have.

## Issues Surrounding Marital Quality and Divorce in Utah:

The Utahns in this sample were slightly more divorce-prone than the nation as a whole.

Divorce proneness assesses the degree to which people are, or have been, thinking and talking about divorce. It is a strong indicator of the eventual possibility of a divorce. The responses of Utahns on a series of questions on divorce proneness were compared to responses from a national sample of married individuals interviewed in 2000 in the Marriage and Family Life Survey. After controlling for some differences in the present sample and the national sample on age, the results showed that 47% of Utahns have thought at some time that their marriage was in trouble, compared to 42% of people in the U.S. Eight percent (8%) of Utahns have recently thought about getting a divorce, compared to 2% nationally. Fourteen percent (14%) of Utahns have discussed the possibility of getting a divorce with a friend, compared to 7% nationally. Finally, 12% of Utahns indicated they have talked with their spouse about divorce, compared with 8% in the U.S. These differences are presented in Table 14.

**Table 14. Divorce proneness items of currently married persons, in percent.**

Percent Reporting Divorce Proneness		Utah	U.S.
<b>Have thought marriage in trouble</b>			
	Ever	47%	42%
	Last 3 years	27%	25%
	Recently	15%	5%
<b>Thought about divorce</b>			
	Last 3 years	16%	17%
	Recently	8%	2%
<b>Discussed divorce with friend</b>			
	Ever	14%	7%
<b>Talked with spouse about divorce</b>			
	Ever	12%	8%
	Last 3 years	7%	7%
	Recently	4%	3%
<b>Consulted an attorney</b>			
	Ever	2%	2%

In general, married Utahns in this sample were more likely than the U.S. population to think their marriage was in trouble, to discuss divorce with friends, and to talk about divorce with their spouse.

**Utahns were more likely to say they were very happy with their marriage than the nation as a whole.**

Reports of marital happiness from married Utahns were compared to reports of marital happiness from a national sample of married respondents from the 2000 General Social Survey. Seventy-four percent (74%) of Utahns indicated that they were “very happy” in their marriages compared to 62% for the U.S. population (see Table 15).

**Table 15. Ratings of marital happiness, currently married persons.**

Would you say your marriage is very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?	Utah	U.S.
Very happy	74%	62%
Pretty happy	24%	34%
Not too happy	2%	3%

**Most divorced parents with nonresident children reported feeling close to their children and being satisfied with these relationships.**

The majority of divorced parents (59%) with nonresident children described their relationships as “very close,” 27% described their relationships as “somewhat close,” and 14% described their relationships as “not close at all.” Divorced parents’ levels of relationship satisfaction with their nonresident children mirrors their level of closeness to their children. Fifty-three percent (53%) of divorced parents said they were “very satisfied” with their relationship with the nonresident child(ren), 26% said they were “somewhat satisfied,” and 21% said they were not very satisfied (see Table 16). It should be noted that these parent ratings of closeness and satisfaction do not vary with race, age, or educational level of the respondent.

**Table 16. Divorced parents' ratings of closeness to and satisfaction with relationship with nonresidential children.**

<b>Divorced parents' relationships with nonresident children</b>			
<b>Closeness to children</b>		<b>Satisfied with relationship</b>	
Very close	59%	Very satisfied	53%
Somewhat close	27%	Somewhat satisfied	26%
Not close at all	14%	Not very satisfied	21%

**Young age at first marriage was related to divorce in Utah.**

Since Utahns marry an average of 3.5 years younger than the national average, it is important to examine how their age at marriage relates to the likelihood of divorce. Research shows that people who marry in their teens are much more likely to divorce than those who marry when they are older and many studies show at least a weak negative relationship between age at first marriage and divorce proneness from the early to late-twenties. Nationally, the relationship between age at first marriage and divorce proneness is equally strong for males and females, though the age beyond which further increments in age make little difference in divorce proneness is lower for females than for males, reflecting perhaps the younger typical age at which females marry.

The pattern of divorce proneness by age at first marriage among this sample of Utahns was similar to that shown by other studies, although Utah's divorce rate by age is lower overall than the national average. The percentage in this sample of ever-married persons, who had ever been divorced, by age at first marriage, is displayed along with U.S. national data (1990-1994 General Social Surveys) in Table 17.

**Table 17. Age at first marriage, by percentage divorced.**

<b>Age at first marriage</b>	<b>Utah, 2003</b>	<b>U.S., 1990-1994</b>
<20	44%	48%
20-23	35%	32%
24-27	16%	25%
28+	5%	18%

Similar to national data, the likelihood of Utahns being divorced was greater with early age at marriage. It is interesting to note that the divorce rate for Utahns who marry at age 24 or later is considerably lower than the national average.

The divorce rate for teenagers (especially males) may be higher than for other age groups because they are typically less mature and less prepared to handle the responsibilities and commitments of marriage, and possible parenthood. Also, their preferences and standards for a mate, as well as their own characteristics that determine their desirability as a spouse, may not yet have become stable<sup>13</sup>.

**Those who married between the ages of 20-23 reported the highest level of marital happiness.**

It is interesting to note that even though the relationship between age at first marriage and divorce is very similar for both Utah and the U.S., early age at marriage was associated with a relatively high level of marital happiness in Utah. Although Utahns' levels of marital happiness were rather high, regardless of age group, those who were between 20-23 years of age when they married, and who have remained married, reported the highest levels of marital happiness for all age groups in Utah (see Table 18). It should be noted that 20-23 years of age is also the average age at which both males and females marry in Utah.

**Table 18. Ratings of marital happiness, by age at first marriage.**

Would you say your marriage is very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?	Age at first marriage			
	<20	20-23	24-27	28+
Very happy	71%	78%	71%	74%
Pretty happy	28%	21%	28%	22%
Not too happy	1%	1%	1%	4%

### Measures Used in Upcoming Analyses

The authors of the Oklahoma Study utilized several measures that reflect the quality of the respondents' relationships. These measures, outlined below, were assessed by three or more survey items and combined to create a summary score.

- *Interpersonal Commitment*: These items asked respondents whether or not they made their relationship with their partner a high priority, whether or not they thought of themselves and their partner as a team, and whether or not they desired to remain together into the future.

- *Negative Interaction*: These items asked how frequently respondents had conflicts that included four hallmarks of corrosive communication: escalation (arguments with rising emotional intensity), invalidation (put downs or disregarding of one's opinion), negative interpretations (the tendency to see motivations unfairly negatively), and withdrawal (the tendency for one or both partners to pull away from talking about issues and concerns).

- *Feeling Trapped*: One item asked respondents to what extent they agreed/disagreed with the statement, "I feel trapped in this marriage/relationship but I stay because I have too much to lose if I leave."

- *Divorce Proneness*: As mentioned earlier, a number of questions were asked to assess the degree to which people had thought about and/or talked about divorce.

- *Positive Bond*: Two items were asked that could be taken as evidence (or not) of having a positive bond: one having to do with whether or not the respondent said they could talk as good friends in their relationship, and the second having to do with how long it had been since they had gone out together as a couple on a date.

- *Overall Satisfaction*: Respondents were asked how happy they were in their marriages as well as how satisfied they were. Here, overall satisfaction is the composite of these two questions<sup>14</sup>.

### Men and women shared more similarities than differences in dimensions of marital quality.

Men's and women's responses were compared on the various dimensions of marital quality mentioned above. In comparing married men's and women's responses, a number of factors were statistically controlled for, including number of years married, income, age, and education. Low-income adults were not included in this analysis because those respondents tended to be women, younger, and poorer, and would, therefore, skew the results for the rest of the general sample when testing for gender differences.

Overall, men and women were not significantly different on any of the ratings of marital quality. That is to say, married men and women did not differ in their ratings of commitment, negative interaction, feeling trapped, thoughts and talk of divorce, positive bonding, and overall satisfaction.

### Couples in Utah who cohabited prior to marriage were less likely to be doing well in marriage.

When couples that cohabited prior to marriage were compared to couples that did not cohabit prior to marriage, several differences were found on a variety of indicators. Overall, those who cohabited prior to marriage reported lower levels of commitment, lower levels of overall satisfaction, higher levels of negative interaction, were more likely to feel trapped in the marriage, and were more likely to have thought about and discussed divorce. Further, couples that lived together prior to marriage were more likely to have been previously divorced. Forty-three percent (43%) of those who lived together prior to marriage had been divorced at least once, compared to 9% of couples that did not cohabit prior to marriage. It must be noted that these findings are associated with broad average differences between couples that did and did not cohabit prior to marriage.

The aforementioned differences remained whether this was a first marriage or a remarriage. The greatest differences were found between couples that did and did not cohabit prior to marriage and the feeling of being trapped in the marriage. Overall, differences persisted, despite the length of marriage for couples. In fact, contrary to other research, recently married couples in a first marriage who did not cohabit prior to marriage exhibited the same or greater differences in commitment and overall satisfaction than couples who did not cohabit prior to marriage that have been married for many years. In sum, contrary to the perceptions of many, cohabiting prior to marriage does not appear to protect the quality of the future marriage; rather, it set the stage for future difficulties for many couples in this study.

**Utahns with higher religious faith and regular religious attendance were more likely to report higher marital quality and were less likely to have experienced a divorce.**

Utah, a state well-known for its strong religious ties, has a large population of religious adults, of which the vast majority are very happy, regardless of specific religious affiliation. Three survey items that assessed religious faith, outlook, and practice are the focus of the following sections. One item asked respondents about their overall religiosity (religious faith): “All things considered, how religious would you say that you are?” The second item asked about how their religious faith affected their outlook on life (religious outlook): “My outlook on life is based on my religion.” The third item asked about their frequency of attendance (religious practice): “How often do you attend religious services?”

## Religious Faith, Outlook, and Practice, and Current Marital Quality

Adults in Utah, both young and old, male and female, who said they were very religious reported higher average levels of commitment to their partners, higher levels of marital satisfaction, and lower levels of negative interaction. These patterns held steady even after controlling for other variables such as income, education, and age at first marriage. Further, the patterns were strongest for frequency of attendance at religious services. These results were not surprising as church attendance is a behavioral reflection of an expression of religiosity. Table 19 reflects a basic, yet straightforward, indication of marital happiness by frequency of attendance at religious services.

In responding to questions about ever having thoughts about divorce or seriously suggesting the idea of divorce, it was found that regardless of religious affiliation, those who considered themselves “very religious” were less likely to have had thoughts about, or suggested the idea of divorce. However, married members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who classified themselves as very religious, were much less likely to have ever thought their marriage was in trouble and to have discussed divorce or separation with a close friend, than respondents of other religious affiliations who categorized themselves as very religious.

**Table 19. Ratings of marital happiness, by frequency of attendance at religious services.**

Would you say your marriage is very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?	How often do you attend religious services?			
	Never or almost never	Occasionally, but less than once per month	One to three times per month	One or more times per week
Very happy	57%	66%	68%	81%
Pretty happy	42%	29%	31%	17%
Not too happy	1%	5%	1%	2%

Utah adults were also asked whether their outlook on life was based on their religion. Eighty-one percent (81%) of respondents indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that their outlook on life was based on their religion. Interestingly, 81% of those that strongly agreed with the previous statement indicated they were also very happy, while only 54% of those that strongly disagreed that their outlook on life was based on their religion indicated they were very happy.

## History of Divorce and Religious Involvement

Overall, Utahns who indicated they were very religious were the least likely to have ever been through a divorce, with 10% of those who said they were very religious having experienced a divorce, compared to 20% of those who said they were not at all religious. Perhaps more interestingly, Table 20 reflects that 34% of ever-divorced respondents attended religious services one or more times per week, compared to 61% of never-divorced respondents that attended one or more times per week. These findings remained significant after controlling for other variables that might affect the interpretation of the data, such as age, age at first marriage, income, and gender.

After a number of statistical analyses were conducted, it appeared that actual frequency of religious service attendance reflects the greatest impact on marital quality. Additionally, it is possible that the conservative religious beliefs held by many Utahns may play a role in the tendency to marry young, and, consequently, have an indirect effect on Utah's slightly higher-than-average divorce rate.

**Table 20. History of divorce, by frequency of attendance at religious services.**

Have you ever been divorced?	How often do you attend religious services?			
	Never or almost never	Occasionally, but less than once per month	One to three times per month	One or more times per week
Yes	34%	19%	13%	34%
No	16%	10%	13%	61%

### What factors affect marital happiness and thoughts of divorce among Utahns?

Taken together, the three variables most strongly related to overall marital satisfaction and divorce proneness were, in order of influence: negative interaction, interpersonal commitment, and positive bonding experiences.

Negative interaction was found to have the strongest and most consistent influence on marital satisfaction, followed by commitment to one's partner. After controlling for several variables, those who reported more negative interaction in their marriages were significantly less likely to be satisfied in those marriages. Thus, the two key indicators of overall marital quality from this study were negative interaction and commitment.

### The vast majority of Utahns who once thought their marriage was in serious trouble were glad they stayed together.

Currently married respondents were asked to indicate whether they had ever thought their marriage might be in serious trouble, even to the point of contemplating divorce. The exact question was stated, "Sometimes couples experience serious problems in their marriage and have thoughts of ending their marriage. Even people who get along quite well with their spouse sometimes wonder whether their marriage is working out. Have you ever thought your marriage might be in trouble?"

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of currently married individuals had, at some point, *both* considered their marriage to be in serious trouble and thought about divorce. Respondents were then asked whether they were glad they were still together. Specifically, married persons were asked whether they were "glad" they had hung in there, if they were "unsure", had "mixed feelings", or if they were "not glad" that they had stayed together in their marriage. Table 21 displays the answers by age categories.

Among those who thought their marriage might be in trouble at some point, 94% said they were glad they were still together. Recently-married couples (within the past seven years) were the least likely group to respond they were glad their marriage was still intact. The first years of marriage are often cited as the most difficult years. However, even the large majority of this group (87%) indicated they were glad they were still together (see Table 21). Neither males nor females were any more or less likely to have experienced a time when they thought their marriage might be in trouble, and neither gender was more or less likely to have expressed they were glad they had stayed together.

**Table 21. Responses to “Are you glad you are still together?” of currently married persons who at some point thought their marriage was in trouble and thought of divorce, by number of years married in categories.**

Glad still together?	Number of years married in categories			
	< 1 year—7 years	8—18 years	19—33 years	34 or more years
Not glad	0%	1%	1%	6%
Unsure/mixed	13%	3%	3%	0%
Glad	87%	96%	96%	94%

## Summary of Quality of Relationships in Utah

Although many couples in Utah marry at a younger age than the national average, the majority of couples reported they were very happy, with the happiest couples reporting high levels of commitment, low levels of negative interaction, not living together prior to marriage, and a strong tie to a religious faith, including consistent attendance at religious services. Although nearly half of married Utahns had thought their marriage was in trouble at some point, the vast majorities were glad they had stayed together. Interestingly, the data show Utahns report the major causes of their divorce are the same qualities associated with marital satisfaction and thoughts of divorce, namely, negative interaction and commitment. Therefore, the factors from this report that detail why some marriages thrive and others end might be used to help more couples find happiness in their marriages.

## Policies and Programs: Utahns’ Opinions, Use, and Interest

### Opinions about Policies Regarding Divorce, Premarital Preparation, and Pre-Divorce Counseling:

**The majority of Utahns believed divorces should be harder to obtain and favored longer waiting periods.**

The entire sample of Utahns surveyed was asked their opinion regarding public policies related to divorce. A slight majority (58%) believed society would be better off if divorces were harder to get. Younger Utahns were less likely to believe this than older people, as were males compared to females. Perhaps surprisingly, 55% of those who had ever been divorced agreed with this statement, compared with 59% of those who had never been divorced.

Sixty-four percent (64%) of those surveyed believed that longer waiting periods before finalizing a divorce gives people time to get over their anger, work out their problems, and reconcile. People who had experienced a divorce were less likely to believe this, compared to people who had never been divorced.

**Most Utahns surveyed held favorable views of premarital preparation.**

The great majority (92%) of Utahns believed it was very important or somewhat important for couples to prepare for marriage through educational classes, workshops, or counseling designed to get them off to a good start. Fifty percent (50%) believed it was very important and another 42% believed it was somewhat important. Men and women held similar positive views of premarital preparation. Ever-divorced persons were more likely than never-married persons or ever-married persons to believe premarital preparation was “very important” (see Table 22). This finding suggests that persons who have experience with divorce recognize the value of preparing for marriage.

**Table 22. Ratings of importance of premarital preparation, by marital history.**

How important is it to prepare for marriage...	Marital History		
	Ever-divorced	Ever-married	Never married
Very important	62%	52%	44%
Somewhat important	29%	40%	49%
Not very important	6%	6%	2%
Not important at all	3%	2%	5%

Nearly all of the Utahns surveyed (95%) favored requiring marital counseling for couples with children before a divorce can be granted.

When asked whether marital counseling or therapy should be required before granting a divorce for couples with children, 95% of Utahns agreed it should be a requirement. Seventy percent (70%) believed requiring marital counseling before granting the divorce was a very good idea, while another 25% thought it would be a good idea. Ever-divorced persons were less likely (62%) than never-divorced individuals (71%) to believe requiring counseling would be a very good idea. Overall, the majority of Utahns supported the idea of mandating marital counseling prior to divorce for couples with children.

## Use of Premarital Preparation and Pre-Divorce Counseling:

Slightly more than one-fourth (27%) of Utahns have participated in premarital education.

Among currently married Utahns, 27% participated in premarital preparation in the form of educational classes, workshops, or counseling, prior to marrying. More recently-married persons were more likely to have participated in premarital education, with 39% of those married within the past seven years having participated in premarital preparation. Considering only respondents in first marriages, 30% had premarital education, while 44% of those marrying within the past seven years had participated in some form of premarital preparation.

Nearly two-thirds (67%) of all persons who participated in premarital preparation reported that it took place in a religious setting (e.g., church, synagogue, etc.). Those married within the past seven years reported the average number of hours they spent in premarital preparation classes or counseling was 21 hours; however, the median number of hours spent in premarital preparation was 10 hours. However, it should be noted that data was not collected pertaining to the format or topics covered as part of the marriage preparation. For instance, there is no way of knowing whether the premarital preparation consisted of meetings with clergy, or more formal classes with specified curriculum.

Utahns who had participated in premarital education were more likely to say they would be interested in relationship education classes at this point in time to strengthen their relationships (88%) than people who did not have premarital preparation (68%). This finding is true for both men and women, which might reflect a greater willingness among people who had participated in premarital education to return to marriage educational resources for assistance. It may also simply mean that people who were likely to have participated in premarital education may also be more likely to access services to keep their marriages strong.

Eighty-four percent (84%) of those who participated in premarital education reported being “very happy”, compared to 71% who did not.

Utahns who participated with their spouse in premarital education programs, such as educational classes, workshops, or counseling, had statistically significantly higher overall satisfaction scores when compared to respondents that did not participate in such programs prior to marriage. Eighty-four percent (84%) of those who participated in premarital education indicated they were “very happy”, compared to 71% of those who did not participate in premarital education. Those who participated in some form of premarital education also had overall higher commitment scores, were more likely to indicate they could talk as good friends in their relationship, had lower divorce proneness scores, were less likely to feel trapped in their marriage, and had lower negative interaction scores. Thus, the data clearly demonstrate a positive relationship between premarital education and overall satisfaction.

**Nearly half (48%) of Utahns sought counseling prior to divorce.**

Respondents who have ever been divorced were asked if they had sought counseling from a therapist or religious leader before getting their most recent divorce. Nearly one-half (48%) sought counseling prior to getting their divorce, while 52% did not. Of those who did seek counseling, 41% received counseling from a marital or mental health therapist, 27% from a religious leader, and 32% from both a therapist and clergy leader. Persons who cohabited prior to marriage with their former spouse were more likely to go to a marital or mental health therapist for counseling (64%), while persons who did not cohabit prior to marriage were more likely to go to a religious leader for counseling (40%).

Currently-married Utahns were asked if they had ever used counseling from a therapist or religious leader for their current marriage. Only 22% indicated they had ever sought counseling for their current marriage (78% had not sought counseling), with 41% going to a therapist, 32% going to a religious leader, and 26% receiving counseling from both sources.

**Interest in Relationship Education, Awareness of Resources Developed by Utah’s Governor’s Commission on Marriage, and Attitudes Regarding a Statewide Initiative to Strengthen Marriages:**

**Most Utahns in this study would use relationship education to strengthen their relationship.**

Three out of four (75%) currently married persons and persons involved in a steady romantic relationship indicated they would consider using methods of relationship education, such as workshops or classes, to strengthen their relationship. A number of factors were related to greater interest in relationship education. Those who had ever received government assistance, those with children in the household, younger persons, and those who attended religious services more frequently expressed greater interest in relationship education.

Never-married respondents (75%) expressed nearly equal interest in relationship education as married persons (74%). Women were slightly more interested in relationship education than men (77% versus 72%). Persons who had never been divorced (75%) were somewhat more interested in workshops or classes to strengthen their relationship than persons who had ever been divorced (70%). Utahns who had ever received government assistance (81%) were more interested in relationship education than those who had never received such assistance (73%).

Consistent with data presented earlier in this report regarding younger (ages 18-25) people’s views on marriage, divorce, and cohabitation, this age group also reported a fairly high interest in relationship education. However, it was those between the ages of 25-44 who expressed the greatest interest in relationship education, with 83% of those in this category indicating interest in the subject (see Table 23).

**Table 23. Interest in relationship education, by age in categories.**

Would you consider relationship education... to strengthen your relationship?	Age categories			
	18-24 years old	25-44 years old	45-64 years old	65 and over
Yes	78%	83%	70%	46%

People with one or more children under the age of 18 in the household were marginally more likely (82%) to be interested in relationship education than those with no children in the household (77%). This may indicate people are more motivated to improve their relationships if children are involved.

Interest in relationship education varied only slightly by educational level (see Table 24). Persons who had less than a high school education were nearly as interested (75%) in strengthening their relationship through workshops or classes as persons who had a postgraduate degree (78%). This may indicate that people in Utah have great interest in receiving education that will strengthen their relationship, irrespective of educational level. People who attend religious services more frequently are also more likely to say they would consider using relationship education services (78%) than those who do not attend services regularly (68%).

**Table 24. Interest in relationship education, by educational level.**

Educational Level	Would you consider relationship education... to strengthen your relationship?
Less than high school graduate (0-11)	75%
High school graduate (12)	64%
Some college	79%
Trade/technical/vocational training	58%
College graduate	83%
Postgraduate work/degree	78%

Most Utahns in the survey were more aware of efforts by churches to strengthen marriages and reduce divorces than they were aware of such efforts by state agencies.

Among the respondents, 64% said they were aware of efforts by churches and synagogues to strengthen marriages and reduce divorces in Utah. Persons who had never been divorced were more aware than ever-divorced persons of efforts by churches to strengthen marriages and reduce divorce. Not surprisingly, people who regularly attended religious services were more likely to be aware of such efforts. Far fewer adults in Utah (24%) were aware of efforts by state agencies to strengthen marriages and reduce divorces in Utah.

Few Utahns have used resources developed by the Governor's Commission on Marriage.

Only 4% of all Utah adults surveyed said they had used any of the Marriage Commissions' resources such as conferences, the video for newlyweds, or the website on marriage. Of the 4% who did access these resources, 40% attended a Statewide Governor's Conference on Marriage, 18% attended a Regional Governor's Conference on Marriage, 29% have visited the website [www.UtahMarriage.org](http://www.UtahMarriage.org), and 35% watched the 2002 video tape created for all newlyweds.

Nearly ninety percent (87%) of Utahns supported the idea of a statewide marriage initiative.

When asked how they felt about the idea of a statewide initiative to promote marriages and reduce divorces, most Utah adults (87%) said they thought this was a very good or good idea (39% very good idea, 48% good idea). Only 11% said this was a bad idea, and 3% said it was a very bad idea.

Women, currently married people, and people 25-44 years old were more likely to be supportive of a statewide marriage initiative. Slightly more women than men reported they believed it was a very good idea (42% of women vs. 36% of men). More people 25-44 years old rated it a very good idea (41%) compared to 37% of persons 18-24 years old, 39% of persons 45-64 years old, and 37% of persons age 65 and over. It should also be noted that views on an initiative did *not* vary greatly by whether or not people had ever been divorced, with 88% of those never divorced saying it was a good or very good idea compared to 80% of those ever-divorced.

Support for a marriage initiative varied by race of respondent, though the vast majority of all groups felt positive about the idea. Hispanics/Latinos showed overwhelmingly strong support, with 97% saying they thought a marriage initiative to promote marriages and reduce divorces was a very good or good idea, followed by 87% of Whites, and 68% of American Indians (African Americans only accounted for .3% of the entire sample, and thus were too few to include in an analysis). Views of the statewide marriage initiative by race are presented in Table 25.

**Table 25. Opinions of a statewide marriage initiative, by race.**

How do you feel about a statewide initiative to promote marriage and reduce divorce?	White	Hispanic/Latino	American Indian
Very good idea	39%	26%	38%
Good idea	48%	71%	30%
Bad idea	10%	3%	32%
Very bad idea	3%	0%	0%

## Summary of Policies and Programs

To summarize this section, the majority of Utahns believed it was very important to prepare for marriage, despite age, gender, or marital history. Additionally, many Utahns have participated in premarital education, with persons recently married being more likely to have participated. Most of this premarital education took place in a religious setting. While most adults in this sample of Utahns have not used pre-divorce counseling or marital counseling, the majority expressed interest in using relationship education. The majority of Utahns supported the idea of a statewide marriage initiative, but few have actually utilized resources offered by Utah's Governor's Commission on Marriage.

## Low-Income Adults in Utah

This section gives particular attention to low-income adults in Utah. For the purposes of this study, low-income adults are defined as persons who are currently receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds from the government. The following data may not be representative of all low-income participants, as all low-income persons (as this definition is used elsewhere) may not necessarily be TANF recipients. Thus, the TANF recipients are referred to as "low-income adults" for purposes of this study only.

Respondents who receive government assistance (TANF) are at higher risk for poor relationship and marital outcomes due to a variety of background factors. They were twice as likely as those in the general sample of Utahns to have a high school education or less. They were much less likely to be employed full-time and much more likely to be unemployed. This sample of TANF recipient adults lived together more often before marriage, had children at a younger age, and had more children than the average Utahn. Low-income adults are more likely to be younger, non-white, and female. These low-income adults were also more likely to struggle with some type of mental health condition. Over ninety percent of recipients of government assistance (TANF) had a combined family income of less than \$20,000 per year. Each of these factors is related to an increased likelihood of divorce.

**Low-income Utahns generally held less-positive attitudes toward marriage and were more accepting of cohabitation than the general sample of Utahns.**

TANF recipients showed generally less-positive attitudes toward marriage and more acceptance of cohabitation than people in the general sample. The fact that group differences remained significant, even after controlling for age, suggests that attitudes about marriage and cohabitation may be the result of respondents' personal experiences with divorce and/or the threat of losing benefits after marriage, rather than age-related cultural attitudes.

Compared to the randomly selected sample of Utahns, low-income adults were less likely to believe spouses could be counted on more than a cohabiting partner (56% low-income population vs. 79% general sample); and, therefore, they apparently were less likely to see advantages of marriage over cohabitation. Low-income Utahns were also more likely than the general sample of Utahns to believe that a divorce is better than a bad marriage (93% low-income population compared to 63% general sample).

Compared to the general sample of Utahns, low-income adults were more likely to believe that parents who no longer love each other should get a divorce, even if they have children (57% low-income population vs. 27% general sample).

They were also more likely to believe that parents who do not get along should divorce. Among these low-income adults, only 29% agreed that people who have children together ought to be married, compared to 70% of the general sample believing that parents should be married.

Low-income Utahns reported more favorable views of non-marital cohabitation, with 75% believing this arrangement is acceptable, compared to 33% of the general sample of Utahns. Furthermore, 49% of low-income adults reported that non-marital cohabitation has all the benefits of marriage without the legal details, while only 29% of the general sample of Utahns shared this view. Similarly, low-income adults (64%) were more likely than the general sample (25%) to believe that cohabitation improves their chances for a good marriage.

Although this sample of low-income adults in Utah was more likely to cohabit prior to marriage, their desire to eventually marry was not significantly different than the general sample of adults (90% low-income population vs. 94% general sample). In fact, low-income adults in Utah, who had been married but were now divorced, remain very committed to the idea of marriage. Their desire to remarry was higher (85%) than their counterparts in the general sample after divorce (58%).

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the TANF sample of low-income Utahns who were not married said they thought they would lose some of their government benefits if they married. Therefore, although low-income Utahns have a high desire to marry, the economic reality of losing benefits for themselves and/or their children may stand in the way.

**Utah's low-income adults were more likely to be currently divorced or never married, more likely to have been ever-divorced, and more likely to have ever been or currently be cohabiting.**

Utah's low-income adults were less likely to be currently married (15%) than adults in the general sample (58%). Low-income adults were more likely to be currently divorced and not remarried (14%) than adults in the general sample of Utahns (7%). Low-income adults were also nearly twice as likely to have never been married (63%) compared to adults in the general sample (32%).

Low-income Utahns were more likely than the general sample of Utahns to have been ever-divorced (see Table 26).

**Table 26. Percent ever-divorced, by current receipt of government assistance.**

	Utah general sample	Low-income (TANF)
% Ever-divorced	13%	30%

Low-income Utahns were more likely than the general sample of Utahns to have ever been or currently be cohabiting (see Table 27).

**Table 27. Percent of Utahns ever or currently cohabiting, by receipt of government assistance.**

	Utah general sample	Low-income (TANF)
% Currently cohabiting	7%	16%
% Who ever cohabited	19%	37%

**Low-income Utahns cited several reasons for their own divorces.**

Study respondents who had been ever-divorced were asked to indicate what factors most contributed to their divorces. Six of the reasons differed significantly, based on whether or not the respondent was a current TANF recipient. Individuals who were receiving government assistance were more likely than respondents in the general sample to indicate that the following reasons were major contributors to their divorce: too much conflict and arguing, getting married too young, little or no helpful premarital preparation, financial problems or economic hardship, domestic violence, and lack of support from family members. Low-income persons did not differ significantly from the general sample of Utahns on the following reasons for divorce: lack of commitment, infidelity or extramarital affairs, and religious differences between partners. Table 28 breaks down the reasons respondents cited for their divorce who also receive TANF government assistance.

**Table 28. Reasons for respondents' divorces, given in percent, indicating factor contributed to divorce, by current receipt of government assistance.**

Reasons for Respondent's Prior Divorce	Percent Indicating "Yes"	
	Utah general sample	Low-income (TANF)
Lack of commitment	83%	79%
Too much conflict and arguing	53%	71%*
Infidelity or extramarital affairs	51%	42%
Getting married too young	40%	55%*
Little or no helpful premarital preparation	23%	48%*
Financial problems or economic hardship	31%	65%*
Domestic violence	21%	52%*
Lack of support from family members	20%	42%*
Religious differences between partners	14%	25%

\*Differences are statistically significant,  $p < .05$ .

**Among low-income Utahns, divorce proneness was higher and marital quality was lower.**

Divorce proneness was higher among Utah's low-income adults, compared with the general sample of Utahns. Economic hardship was a major cause of divorce proneness. Low-income Utahns were more likely than the general sample of the state to describe their marriages as less happy, to think their marriages might be in trouble, to think about getting a divorce, to discuss divorce with friends, to talk with their spouses about divorce, and/or to consult with an attorney about divorce.

On every measure of relationship quality examined, low-income Utahns consistently scored less favorably than the general sample of Utahns. Measures of relationship quality included commitment to spouse, negative interaction, marital happiness, marital satisfaction, feeling trapped in the relationship, having good conversations with spouse, and the number of weeks since the couple had an evening out. More specifically, 12% of low-income respondents said they were "not too happy" with their marriage, compared to only 2% of the general sample. Twelve percent (12%) of low-income respondents also said they were "not very or not at all satisfied" with their marriage compared to only 1% for the general sample of Utahns. These differences remained significant after controlling for respondent's age.

**Commitment and negative interaction were associated with marital happiness and satisfaction among low-income adults in much the same way as in the general sample of Utah adults.**

Although low-income Utahns had less favorable scores on every measure of relationship quality examined, they showed virtually identical associations of negative interaction and commitment with marital happiness and satisfaction, compared to the general sample of Utahns. It is important to be aware of this because when it comes to internal relationship dynamics among those who are married, there are many similarities between low-income Utahns and the Utah general sample. However, since less is known about the relationship dynamics of those who are both low-income and not married, these findings may not apply to them. Relationship dynamics may work very differently for this population. Further, even for those who are married, there are important differences related to financial hardship that put low-income couples at greater risk than other couples for managing the conflict and stress.

**Low-income adults expressed high interest in relationship education.**

Eighty-three percent (83%) of low-income adults said they would consider using relationship education, such as workshops or classes, to strengthen their relationship. In fact, the percentage of low-income adults who would consider relationship education (83%) was greater than the percentage of adults in the general sample who would consider using relationship education (74%) (see Table 29).

**Table 29. Interest in relationship education, by receipt of government assistance.**

Would you consider relationship education to strengthen your relationship?	Utah general sample	Low-income (TANF)
Yes	74%	83%
No	26%	17%

In addition, virtually identical percentages of the low-income (86%) and general sample of Utahns (87%) responded that the idea of a statewide initiative to promote marriage and reduce divorce was a “very good” or “good idea.”

### Summary of Findings Regarding Low-Income Utahns:

Low-income adults in Utah face greater obstacles in developing and sustaining healthy relationships and marriages than adults in the Utah general sample. They were more likely to have troubled relationships and to have been divorced. However, they maintain strong desires to marry and they were just as likely as the general sample of Utahns to be open to receiving relationship education and to a statewide initiative to promote marriage and reduce divorce.

## Impact of Mental Health and Substance Abuse on Relationships in Utah

This section provides a brief overview of the state of mental health of both low-income adults and adults in the general sample of Utahns. This section also reports on the impact of mental health on respondents’ current and past relationships/marriages. For the purposes of this study, low-income adults were defined as people who were currently receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) from the government.

### Low-income Utahns had significantly higher rates of mental health problems than the general population.

Low-income adults indicated that 43% of them had experienced anxiety, compared to 22% for the general sample of Utahns. Fifty-one percent (51%) of low-income adults had experienced depression, compared to 32% for the general sample. Low-income adults were twice as likely as adults in the general sample to have experienced problems with drugs and/or alcohol. Low-income adults were also more likely to have experienced other types of mental health conditions than the general sample of Utahns (see Table 30).

**Table 30. Percent of Utahn respondents who have ever experienced mental health condition(s).**

Mental health conditions	Percent Indicating “Yes”	
	Utah general sample	Low-income (TANF)
Anxiety	22%	43%*
Depression	32%	51%*
Alcohol or Drug Problem	8%	19%*
Other condition	4%	10%*

\*Differences are statistically significant,  $p < .01$ .

On average, mental health problems affected the current marriages and relationships of low-income Utahns more often than adults in the general sample of Utahns.

Although mental health problems have the potential to affect the marriages and relationships of all people in numerous ways, on average, mental health problems affected the lives of low-income Utahns more often, with the exception of anxiety. The rates at which anxiety was a factor in current relationships, for both the general sample of Utahns and low-income Utahns, were virtually identical. Low-income Utahns indicated that depression and other mental health conditions affected their current relationships slightly more often than adults in the general sample. However,

low-income adults indicated that alcohol or drug problems were significantly more problematic in their current relationships than did the general sample of adults (see Table 31).

**Table 31. How often mental health condition(s) affected current marriages/relationships.**

Mental health conditions	Frequency	Utah general sample	Low-income (TANF)
Anxiety	Rarely/never	55%	56%
	Occasionally	39%	38%
	Most/all the time	6%	6%
Depression	Rarely/never	47%	33%
	Occasionally	44%	50%
	Most/all the time	9%	17%
Alcohol or Drug Problem*	Rarely/never	68%	46%
	Occasionally	15%	8%
	Most/all the time	17%	46%
Other Condition	Rarely/never	62%	61%
	Occasionally	19%	11%
	Most/all the time	19%	28%

\*Group differences are statistically significant,  $p < .01$ .

Mental health problems affected the previous marriages of more low-income Utahns than adults in the general sample of Utahns.

Low-income adults reported much more often that anxiety, depression, and alcohol or drug-use affected their previous marriages compared to adults in the general sample. Low-income adults were also slightly more likely than the general sample of Utah adults to report that other mental health conditions had affected their previous marriages (see Table 32).

**Table 32. How often mental health condition(s) affected a previous marriage.**

Mental health conditions	Frequency	Utah general sample	Low-income (TANF)
Anxiety*	Rarely/never	62%	29%
	Occasionally	19%	32%
	Most/all the time	19%	39%
Depression*	Rarely/never	66%	36%
	Occasionally	19%	30%
	Most/all the time	15%	34%
Alcohol or Drug Problem*	Rarely/never	56%	18%
	Occasionally	13%	46%
	Most/all the time	31%	36%
Other Condition	Rarely/never	75%	36%
	Occasionally	0%	27%
	Most/all the time	25%	37%

\*Group differences are statistically significant,  $p < .01$ .

### **Mental health problems affected Utahns' levels of marital happiness and marital satisfaction.**

Although there were no significant differences between levels of marital happiness and satisfaction for Utahns who had experienced anxiety, significant differences did exist among those who had experienced depression or alcohol and drug problems. Only 67% of Utahns who had ever experienced depression indicated they were "very happy" in their marriages, compared to 78% of those who had not. Utahns who had experienced depression were also more than twice as likely to be "dissatisfied" with their marriages.

Only 37% of Utahns who had experienced alcohol or drug problems indicated they were in "very happy" marriages, compared to 76% of those who had not. Utahns who have not had alcohol or drug problems were more than twice as likely to indicate they were "completely satisfied" with their marriages compared to Utahns who had struggled with alcohol or drugs.

## **Summary of Findings Regarding Mental Health in Utah:**

Mental health conditions affect many Utahns from all walks of life and have a negative impact on Utahns' levels of marital happiness and satisfaction. However, low-income Utahns were much more likely than those in the general sample to suffer from mental health conditions including anxiety, depression, and alcohol or drug problems. These mental health conditions were also more likely to affect the past and present relationships/marriages of low-income Utahns. The fact that mental health conditions were more often problematic for low-income adults than for adults in the general sample for both current and previous marriages may be partly a function of low-income Utahns' limited access to health care providers and therapists who can aid them in treating and managing these conditions.

## **Summary and Implications for Education**

The findings of this study have shed light on patterns of marriage, divorce, and cohabitation in Utah. As a result, several important implications for educators and policymakers have emerged.

### **Utah's Youth Need Premarital Education**

Although fewer Utahns have experienced divorce in comparison with the national average, a significant number of Utah adults have contemplated divorce. Premarital and marriage education could possibly help Utahns who are either contemplating or may contemplate divorce, to avoid actually divorcing. Utahns who marry young (before the age of 20) are at the highest risk of experiencing a divorce. Educating Utah's youth about the difficulties associated with early marriage and encouraging them to wait until their 20s to get married, may be a useful intervention in reducing divorce. It is recognized, however, that such efforts must be combined with efforts to discourage teen pregnancies, which also places those involved at a higher risk of future divorce.

Since Utah has such a young marrying population, the ideal place to begin educating Utah's youth about building and maintaining strong marriages is in Utah's high schools. It would serve Utahns well if the existing classes that are taught about preparing for successful relationships in some high schools were expanded and offered to more students. These classes could teach essential relationship skills, such as conflict management, effective communication, and effective money management. Such courses would provide those students who choose to marry young, or those who choose full-time employment or technical training over college, the opportunity to have some formalized marriage preparation that they may not have access to otherwise. Premarital education is an important resource that strengthens couples' relationship skills and enhances their overall relationship quality<sup>15</sup>.

### **Utah's College Students May Benefit from Skill-based Premarital/Marriage Education**

Although Utah's colleges and universities offer a variety of coursework, and even majors related to family life, most of these courses may be more abstract and theoretical than skill-based. Students who major in the field of family life and take several courses in that area, may be able to translate the theory they learn in the classroom to real-world application in their own and others' relationships. However, students who take an introductory family science class hoping to learn hands-on skills and techniques they can use in their dating and in the formation of marriage relationships may be somewhat disappointed. Offering an introductory-level, skill-based, relationship-building marriage preparation course in Utah's colleges and universities may provide many students with information and skills that will help them have successful marriages at a time frame of life when they are very likely to be considering marriage.

### Interpersonal and Relationship Skills Should Be Taught

Utahns report that they divorce primarily because of a lack of commitment, too much conflict, infidelity, early marriage, and economic hardship. Several of these reasons for divorce stem from interpersonal skills and behaviors that form the core of human relationships. Ongoing marriage education may help married Utahns develop and hone these skills. In addition to ongoing marriage education, it is important for marrying couples to have access to relationship education resources at the point of marriage. One way to do this might be to provide classes for newlywed couples, which encourage the development of positive interpersonal skills early in the marriage, while pointing out factors related to divorce. Strengthening the state's public library holdings, even creating a special section within libraries dedicated to building strong marriages, may be a valuable way to reach and educate Utah citizens about strong marriages.

### Cohabiting is a Poor Testing Ground for Marriage

Although cohabitation outside of marriage is rejected by most Utahns, for many, cohabitation may be perceived as a testing-ground for marriage and as a living arrangement with many benefits, few drawbacks, and no legal ties. However, the Utah Marriage Study, as well as several other studies, indicates those who lived with their spouse prior to marriage reported lower levels of marital satisfaction and commitment. They also have higher levels of negative interaction and are more likely to think about divorce than those couples that did not live together prior to marriage. Some couples may choose to cohabit due to a lower level of confidence in the institution of marriage to begin with. Additionally, they may also have fewer social and family sources of support to aid them in times of stress<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, it is important to teach young people about the drawbacks of cohabiting and to encourage those couples that cohabit prior to marriage to receive some form of marriage preparation. A related endeavor that might be helpful in reducing the divorce rate for those who cohabited before marriage is to provide marriage enhancement education after marriage. These courses could be offered in religious or community settings by clergy/leaders who have been trained to teach premarital and marriage strengthening courses.

### Divorce is Not Always the Best Option

Divorce education might also be useful for married couples that are either hoping to avoid or are considering divorce. Research suggests that divorce has many potentially devastating consequences of which families may not be aware. Divorce takes a financial, emotional, and spiritual toll on families. The Utah Marriage Study indicates that a majority (94%) of couples that thought about divorce at one point, but "stuck it out", were glad they were still together. Although the decision to divorce is never easy, couples that have been married a shorter period of time, may make the decision more quickly than couples in long-term marriages. Educational programs that encourage couples considering divorce to take time and weigh their decisions might enable couples to make better choices in the event of a divorce. However, it is necessary to realize that in some cases, divorce might be an important step toward the safety and well-being of those involved. Consequently, marriage education programs need to be sensitive to the unique contexts of individuals' lives before delivering any intervention in this direction.

### Low-Income Utahns Want Premarital and Marriage Education

The findings for low-income Utahns also have important implications for policy and education. While it is important to recognize that the proportion of low-income individuals who participated in this study is small, and that these results cannot be over-generalized, a number of useful insights can, nevertheless, be gained. Low-income Utahns appear to have less positive views about marriage and to be more prone to divorce. However, they are also more open to receiving premarital and marriage education in an effort to strengthen their relationships than the general population of Utahns. Consequently, an important intervention would be to provide marriage preparation and relationship enhancement programs for low-income individuals. One way to accomplish this objective might be to make premarital preparation/relationship enhancement a part of the benefit package available to those adults who qualify for temporary public assistance. Any program targeting low-income Utahns must focus on the issues of financial problems, domestic violence, and lack of family support, since these are the major causes for divorce among low-income Utahns.

### The Threat of "Marriage Penalties" for Low-Income Utahns Must be Removed

One of the reasons low-income Utahns may have less favorable attitudes towards marriage than the general population is because the majority of them who are not married realize they would lose some or all of their benefits if they married. This loss of benefits may be viewed as a "marriage penalty" by the low-income population. To address these concerns, public policy regarding welfare benefits may need to be reviewed and revised. It may also be the case that a strong marriage could increase the stability and economic well-being of low-income individuals rather than penalize them.

### Strengthening Mental Health Will Strengthen Marriage

The Utah Marriage Study revealed that the most significant mental health problems in the state of Utah are related to alcohol and drug abuse, depression, and anxiety. These problems are related to lower levels of marital quality and stability, especially among low-income Utahns. Marriage-readiness and educational programs that provide participants with opportunities or resources for mental health assessments and interventions may prove very beneficial in providing engaged/married Utahns with the social support they need.

Successful marriage education curriculums ought to address treatable mental health issues that tend to become marital problems. Educational efforts must strive to remove the stigma of mental health problems and teach participants of the many resources available to them, including the active participation of family members in the treatment process. Policy makers may wish to consider making mental health services more accessible to those who are planning on marrying, especially low-income Utahns, whose mental health needs often go untreated.

### Utahns See Divorce as a Problem They Want Help Solving

There is an urgent need for ongoing studies of marriage in Utah. Research that gives us an adequate picture of the patterns of marital formation and stability in Utah, along with an understanding of the antecedents, consequences, and correlates of these phenomena is vital. The majority of Utahns surveyed in this study are very supportive of educational programming and government policies to help couples prepare for marriage, strengthen existing marriages, and reduce the divorce rate. This finding is highlighted by the fact that the majority of Utahns view divorce as a serious problem. Since Utahns have such a strong interest in supporting healthy marriages, it would be helpful to place greater emphasis, through advertising, on the State-supported programs currently in place to help marriages succeed. It would also be helpful to expand opportunities for marriage education within the state.

### Strengthening Marriage Must be a Community Effort

A majority of respondents who have participated in some form of relationship education have done so in a religious setting, either by choice or because it was their only option. Therefore, marriage education programs should focus on integrating religious, and other community institutions, into statewide initiatives to promote strong marriages. It would also be helpful to provide additional training for religious and community leaders who currently provide premarital and marriage education.

### Summary

The fact that few Utahns have accessed existing State-sponsored marriage strengthening programs, despite the popular belief in the value of such programs, is cause for concern. Some reasons for the limited use of such programs may be a lack of awareness among Utah couples that these programs and services are available. Attending a marriage-strengthening workshop may also be perceived as inconvenient and some people may have a lack of motivation or incentive to participate, although they believe it could prove helpful. A useful intervention might be to greatly expand the availability of such programs and to widely publicize them. Couples could be encouraged to participate in these programs by County Clerks when they go to obtain a marriage license, by their parents or family members when they become engaged or have marital trouble, and by religious and community leaders who counsel with couples at various stages in their relationships. Another helpful intervention may be to provide some incentive for couples to participate in state-sponsored marriage strengthening programs, such as a reduced marriage license fee.

Utahns' deserve to be made aware of existing research on how to build and maintain strong marriages. It is important to provide them with widespread access and availability to this knowledge. Therefore, in addition to instructor-lead courses in high schools, colleges, universities, and communities, it would be helpful if quality marriage-strengthening materials were made more accessible to Utahns through the Internet, public libraries, and the state's Extension offices in each county.

The findings from this study provide an excellent overview of key attitudes and behaviors regarding marriage and divorce in Utah. They come at a critical point in time, when policies and decisions regarding how to strengthen marriages and reduce the divorce rate are at the front of national debates. Utah continues to be a forerunner in the nation when it comes to providing couples with the resources they need to build and maintain healthy, stable, and enduring marriages and it is anticipated that the results from this study will enrich the soil from which marriage strengthening efforts will grow in the years to come.

## Appendix A. Methodology of the Study

In an effort to measure attitudes toward marriage and divorce in the state of Utah, the Bureau for Social Research (BSR) at Oklahoma State University (OSU) was contracted to conduct the 2003 Utah Marriage Statewide Baseline Survey. Results for the Utah Study are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of the Bureau for Social Research at Oklahoma State University. This study employed a statewide Utah sample of 1,316 adults, 18 years of age or older. Data were collected between February and April 2003. Based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 2.67 percentage points.

### Survey Instrument:

Questions on this survey came directly from the 2001 Oklahoma Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce. The original questions from the Oklahoma survey were mainly taken from other surveys that have been conducted around the U.S., allowing direct comparisons between state and national findings. Additionally, the 2003 Utah Marriage Survey included additional questions regarding mental health.

The survey instrument included questions on the following topics: 1) attitudes about marriage, divorce, intimate relationships, and cohabitation; 2) qualitative information on couples' relationship quality; 3) involvement and support from family members and friends; 4) knowledge and acceptance of prevention education; 5) religious involvement; 6) utilization of government services; and 7) demographic data on marriage, divorce, remarriage, patterns of cohabitation, intent to marry/remarry, and other demographic data.

### Sampling Design:

This study employed two samples. The first sample consisted of a random selection of households in Utah. This random-digit telephone sample was acquired from the Survey Sampling of Fairfield, Connecticut. The second sample was a random sample drawn from current Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) consumers. This sample served as an over-sample of low-income households, thus allowing comparisons to be made against the general sample of Utahns.

For the random-digit dialing sample of the entire state of Utah, three quota areas were established: 1) the Provo-Orem Metropolitan Statistical Area (Utah County); 2) the Salt Lake City-Ogden Metropolitan Statistical Area (Davis, Salt Lake, and Weber Counties); and 3) the remaining 25 counties in the state. Known business telephone numbers were excluded from the random digit-dialing sample. In addition, the selected telephone numbers were screened for disconnected numbers by Survey Sampling through a computerized dialing protocol that can detect a unique dial tone emitted by some disconnected telephone numbers.

For the TANF over-sample, the Utah Department of Workforce Services drew a random sample of 900 current TANF consumers from their data file. They then mailed a letter to the selected individuals informing them they had been chosen to participate in a study on marriage and family relationships in Utah. Persons interested in participating in the study were instructed to call the OSU BSR and a toll-free telephone number was provided. The letter emphasized that responses would remain confidential; it also indicated that individuals completing the interview would be paid \$15.00. One hundred and fifty-two persons called to complete the interview. Some called in during non-interviewing hours, and 130 total interviews were completed with the TANF sample.

As in all telephone interviews and opinion surveys, the results are subject to biases, sampling, and non-sampling errors. Because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population, based on race and gender, the sample data are weighted in the analysis to compensate for the known biases. The weighted data file adjusts the sample percentages to fit the Utah population with respect to gender, age, education, race, and the percentage of people currently receiving TANF. Unless noted otherwise, the data presented in this report are from the full weighted sample of 1,316 respondents.

**Demographic Characteristics of Respondents:**

The demographic characteristics of the sample are based on weighted data gathered from 1,316 respondents.

*Gender:* 54% of the respondents were male; 46% were female.

*Age:* 31% of the respondents were between 18 and 24 years old, 35% were between 25 and 44 years old, 23% were between 45 and 64 years old, and 11% were 65 years old or older.

*Race:* 91% of the respondents were White, 4% were Hispanic/Latino, 2% were Asian, 1.5% were American Indian/Alaska Native, and 1.5% belonged to other races.

The number of respondents belonging to some specific racial groups (e.g. African Americans) was not large enough to confidently allow inter-group analyses. The reader should be cautioned about the possibility that some findings may vary considerably by racial group, but there are not enough respondents to statistically analyze these differences to conclude if they are actual differences.

*Religion:* 72% of the respondents indicated their religious preference as Latter-day Saints (Mormon), 6% were Protestant, 4% were Catholic, 3% were other religions, and 15% indicated no formal religion.

*Education Level:* 9% of the sample had less than a high school degree; 26% had graduated high school; 30% had some college; 8% had trade, technical, or vocational training; 18% had graduated college; 9% had done postgraduate work or completed a postgraduate degree.

*Work Status:* When asked to indicate their work status during the previous week, 47% of the respondents indicated they were working full-time; 18% were working part-time; less than 1% indicated they had a job, but were not working due to illness, leave, furlough, or strike; less than 1% said they had seasonal work, but were not currently working; 6% were unemployed, laid off, or looking for work; 11% were full time homemakers; 4% were in school; 11% were retired; 1% were disabled for work.

*Children in the home:* 46% of the respondents indicated they had children under the age of 18 living in their home.

*Income:* When asked to report their total family income from all sources for the past year (before taxes and other deductions), 20% of the sample reported an income of \$20,000 or less; 27% reported an income of \$20,000, but less than \$40,000; 20% reported an income of \$40,000, but less than \$60,000; 15% reported \$60,000, but less than \$80,000; 7% reported an income of \$80,000, but less than \$100,000; and 11% reported an income of \$100,000 or more.

*Receipt of government assistance:* Respondents were asked if they had ever received various forms of public assistance, including Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (or Aid for Families with Dependent Children), or Medicaid. Nineteen percent (19%) indicated they currently, or in the past, had received some form of government assistance.

As in Oklahoma, receipt of government assistance and age are strongly related. Whereas, 28% of those between 25 and 44 years of age in Utah have ever received government assistance, a smaller percentage of younger persons and older persons have received government assistance (13% of those between 18 and 24 years of age; 20% of those between 45 and 64 years of age; 9% of those aged 65 and older).

**Analytical Strategy:**

When subsets of cases were used for a particular analysis, an effort was made to retain as many cases as possible. When analyses involved comparing groups of respondents, results were reported only if there were statistically significant differences between groups. In addition, given the relatively large sample size, an effort was made to only report differences between groups that had practical significance.

## Appendix B. Utah/Oklahoma Comparison Tables

As Oklahoma was the first state to conduct a baseline statewide survey on marriage and divorce, we have provided select comparison tables of results from both the Utah and Oklahoma statewide surveys.

**Table 1. Responses to two items pertaining to whether parents with children should divorce.**

	When married people realize they no longer love each other, they should get a divorce even if they have children.		When there are children in the family, parents should stay married even if they don't get along.	
	UT	OK	UT	OK
Strongly agree	5%	6%	4%	4%
Agree	22%	25%	27%	24%
Neither agree/disagree	10%	10%	10%	11%
Disagree	42%	41%	48%	50%
Strongly disagree	22%	19%	10%	12%

**Table 2. Percent of respondents who disagree or strongly disagree that people who have children together ought to be married, by age categories.**

People who have children together ought to be married	Age categories			
	18-24 years old	25-44 years old	45-64 years old	65 and over
Disagree/Strongly Disagree UT Data	31%	27%	14%	5%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree OK Data	42%	36%	18%	6%

**Table 3. Percent of respondents who agree or strongly agree that cohabitation will improve the chances for a good marriage, by age categories.**

People who live together before marriage are likely to improve their chances for a good marriage	Age categories			
	18-24 years old	25-44 years old	45-64 years old	65 and over
Agree/Strongly Agree UT Data	36%	25%	17%	9%
Agree/Strongly Agree OK Data	61%	41%	26%	15%

**Table 4. Marital Status of Utahns and Oklahomans compared to all U.S. citizens.**

Marital status	Utah	Oklahoma	United States
Married	58%	58%	54%
Widowed	3%	9%	7%
Divorced	7%	13%	10%
Separated	<1%	3%	3%
Never married	32%	18%	27%

**Table 5. Number of marriages for all adults, in percent.**

Number of marriages	Percent of Utahns	Percent of Oklahomans
0	32%	18%
1	55%	56%
2	11%	18%
3	2%	6%
More than 3	<1%	2%

**Table 6. Median age at first marriage, by gender.**

Median age at first marriage – Utah survey data				
	UT Men	UT Women	OK Men	OK Women
Married 3 years or less	23	21	24	22
Married 5 years or less	23	21	24	22
Married 10 years or less	23	21	24	22
Median age at first marriage – U.S. data				
	Men		Women	
Married in 2000	26.8		25.1	
Married in 1995	26.9		24.5	
Married in 1990	26.1		23.9	

**Table 7. Age at first marriage, ever-married persons age 18 and older, in percent.**

Age at first marriage	Utah, 2003	Oklahoma, 2001	U.S., 1990-1994
<20	41%	44%	28%
20-23	37%	35%	38%
24-27	17%	12%	21%
28+	5%	8%	13%

**Table 8. Percent of all adults ever-divorced, Utahns and Oklahomans, compared to U.S. citizens.**

	Utah, 2003	Oklahoma, 2001	U.S.
Percent of all adults who have been divorced	16%	32%	21%

**Table 9. Number of divorces for all adults, in percent.**

Number of divorces	Percent of Utahns	Percent of Oklahomans
0	84%	68%
1	12%	22%
2	3%	7%
3	1%	3%
more than 3	<1% (n=3)	About 1%

**Table 10. Percent of non-married Utahns and Oklahomans currently involved in a romantic relationship and cohabiting (total n=86/UT and n=141/OK), by age categories.**

	Age categories			
	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+
<b>UT</b> Non-married romantically involved, and currently cohabiting	30%	46%	40%	75% (n=4)
<b>OK</b> Non-married romantically involved, and currently cohabiting	25%	55%	33%	37% (n=4)

**Table 11. Percent of married persons who lived with their current spouse prior to marriage, by age categories.**

	Age categories			
	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+
<b>UT</b> Cohabited prior to current marriage	24%	16%	19%	4%
<b>OK</b> Cohabited prior to current marriage	60%	46%	25%	4%

**Table 12. Reasons for respondents' divorces, given in percent, indicating factor did contribute to divorce from most frequently endorsed to least frequently endorsed, by gender.**

Reasons for Respondent's Prior Divorce	Utah		Oklahoma		Mean Percent Indicating "Yes"	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	UT	OK
Lack of commitment	87%	79%	85%	86%	83%	85%
Too much conflict and arguing	48%	58%	53%	65%*	53%	61%
Infidelity or extramarital affairs	47%	56%	53%	62%*	52%	58%
Getting married too young	39%	43%	64%	52%*	41%	43%
Financial problems or economic hardship	31%	35%	35%	45%*	33%	42%
Lack of support from family members	21%	20%	27%	28%	21%	21%
Little or no helpful premarital education	19%	29%	31%	45%*	24%	41%
Other reasons	17%	28%	NA	NA	22%	30%
Religious differences between partners	13%	16%	17%	23%	15%	21%
Domestic violence	6%	37%*	8%	44%*	22%	29%

\*Differences are statistically significant,  $p < .05$ .

**Table 13. Responses to two items pertaining to working harder to save the marriage, by gender.**

	Husbands		Wives	
	UT	OK	UT	OK
<b>Do you ever wish that you, yourself had worked harder to save your marriage?</b>				
Yes, I wish I would have worked harder	31%	35%	13%	21%
No, I worked hard enough	69%	65%	87%	79%
<b>Do you ever wish that your spouse had worked harder to save your marriage?</b>				
Yes, I wish my spouse had worked harder	74%	75%	65%	73%
No, my spouse worked hard enough	26%	25%	35%	27%

**Table 14. Divorce proneness items of currently married persons, in percent.**

Percent Reporting Divorce Proneness		UT	OK	U.S.
<b>Have thought marriage in trouble</b>				
	Ever	47%	56%	42%
	Last 3 years	27%	33%	25%
	Recently	15%	8%	5%
<b>Thought about divorce</b>				
	Last 3 years	16%	25%	17%
	Recently	8%	7%	2%
<b>Discussed divorce with friend</b>				
	Ever	14%	19%	7%
<b>Talked with spouse about divorce</b>				
	Ever	12%	17%	8%
	Last 3 years	7%	11%	7%
	Recently	4%	3%	3%
<b>Consulted an attorney</b>				
	Ever	2%	5%	2%

**Table 15. Ratings of marital happiness, currently married persons.**

Would you say your marriage is very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?	UT	OK	U.S.
Very happy	74%	68%	62%
Pretty happy	24%	29%	34%
Not too happy	2%	3%	3%

**Table 16. Divorced parents' ratings of closeness to and satisfaction with relationship with nonresidential children**

Divorced parents' relationships with nonresident children					
Closeness to children			Satisfied with relationship		
	UT	OK		UT	OK
Very close	59%	63%	Very satisfied	53%	35%
Somewhat close	27%	31%	Somewhat satisfied	26%	26%
Not close at all	14%	6%	Not very satisfied	21%	39%

**Table 17. Age at first marriage, by percentage divorced.**

Age at first marriage	Utah, 2003	Oklahoma, 2001	U.S., 1990-1994
<20	44%	51%	48%
20-23	35%	33%	32%
24-27	16%	29%	25%
28+	5%	17%	18%

**Table 18. Ratings of marital happiness, by age at first marriage.**

Would you say your marriage is very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?	Age at first marriage							
	<20		20-23		24-27		28+	
	UT	OK	UT	OK	UT	OK	UT	OK
Very happy	71%	70%	78%	67%	71%	70%	74%	63%
Pretty happy	28%	26%	21%	31%	28%	27%	22%	34%
Not too happy	1%	4%	1%	2%	1%	3%	4%	3%

**Table 19. Ratings of marital happiness, by frequency of attendance at religious services.**

Would you say your marriage is very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?	How often do you attend religious services?							
	Never or almost never		Occasionally, but less than once per month		One to three times per month		One or more times per week	
	UT	OK	UT	OK	UT	OK	UT	OK
Very happy	57%	52%	66%	66%	68%	72%	81%	73%
Pretty happy	42%	44%	29%	30%	31%	25%	17%	25%
Not too happy	1%	5%	5%	4%	1%	3%	2%	2%

**Table 21. Responses to “Are you glad you are still together?” of currently married persons who, at some point, thought their marriage was in trouble and thought of divorce, by number of years married in categories.**

Glad still together?	Number of years married in categories							
	< 1 year—7 years		8—18 years		19—33 years		34 or more years	
	UT	OK	UT	OK	UT	OK	UT	OK
Not glad	0%	6%	1%	2%	1%	0%	6%	2%
Unsure/mixed	13%	15%	3%	2%	3%	5%	0%	1%
Glad	87%	79%	96%	96%	96%	95%	94%	97%

**Table 22. Ratings of importance of premarital preparation, by marital history.**

How important is it to prepare for marriage...	Marital History					
	Ever-divorced		Ever-married		Never married	
	UT	OK	UT	OK	UT	OK
Very important	62%	52%	64%	44%	47%	
Somewhat important	29%	40%	26%	49%	32%	
Not very important	6%	6%	6%	2%	13%	
Not important at all	3%	2%	4%	5%	7%	

**Table 23. Interest in relationship education, by age in categories.**

Would you consider relationship education... to strengthen your relationship?	18-24 years old							
	18-24 years old		25-44 years old		45-64 years old		45-64 years old	
	UT	OK	UT	OK	UT	OK	UT	OK
Yes	78%	77%	83%	75%	70%	60%	46%	36%

---

## End notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Johnson, C. A., Stanley, S. M., Glenn, N. D., Amato, P. A., Nock, S. L., Markman, H. J., & Dion, M. R. (2002). Marriage in Oklahoma: 2001 baseline statewide survey on marriage and divorce (S02096OKDHS). Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Department of Human Services.
- <sup>2</sup> Hamilton, B. E., Martin, J. A., & Sutton, P. D. (2003, June). Births: Preliminary data for 2002. National Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 51, No 11. National Center for Health Statistics: Hyattsville, Maryland.
- <sup>3</sup> Hamilton, B. E., Martin, J. A., & Sutton, P. D. (2003, June). Births: Preliminary data for 2002. National Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 51, No 11. National Center for Health Statistics: Hyattsville, Maryland.
- <sup>4</sup> Simmons, T., & O'Neill, G. (2001, September). Households and Families: 2000. Census 2000 Brief. U.S. Census Bureau: Washington DC.
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States. (2002). Vital Statistics: Section 2. No. 111. Marriages and Divorces-Number and Rate by State: 1990 to 2001.
- <sup>6</sup> Kreider, R. M., & Fields, J. M. (2002, February). Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 1996. Current Population Reports, P-70-80. U.S. Census Bureau: Washington D.C.
- <sup>7</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P20-514, Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1998 (Update), and earlier reports.
- <sup>8</sup> Kreider, R. M., & Fields, J. M. (2002, February). Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 1996. Current Population Reports, P-70-80. U.S. Census Bureau: Washington D.C.
- <sup>9</sup> Kreider, R. M., & Fields, J. M. (2002, February). Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 1996. Current Population Reports, P-70-80. U.S. Census Bureau: Washington D.C.
- <sup>10</sup> Kreider, R. M., & Fields, J. M. (2002, February). Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 1996. Current Population Reports, P-70-80. U.S. Census Bureau: Washington D.C.
- <sup>11</sup> Bumpass, L., & Lu, H. (2000). Trends in cohabitation and implications for children's family contexts in the United States. Population Studies, 54, 29-41.
- <sup>12</sup> Johnson, C. A., Stanley, S. M., Glenn, N. D., Amato, P. A., Nock, S. L., Markman, H. J., & Dion, M. R. (2002). Marriage in Oklahoma: 2001 baseline statewide survey on marriage and divorce (S02096OKDHS). Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Department of Human Services.
- <sup>13</sup> Booth, A., & Edwards, J. (1985). Age at marriage and marital stability. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 47, 67-75.
- <sup>14</sup> Johnson, C. A., Stanley, S. M., Glenn, N. D., Amato, P. A., Nock, S. L., Markman, H. J., & Dion, M. R. (2002). Marriage in Oklahoma: 2001 baseline statewide survey on marriage and divorce (S02096OKDHS). Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Department of Human Services.
- <sup>15</sup> Carroll, J. S., & Doherty, W. J. (2003). Evaluating the effectiveness of premarital prevention programs: A meta-analytic review of outcome research. Family Relations, 52, 105-118.
- <sup>16</sup> Smock, P. J. (2000). Cohabitation in the United States: An appraisal of research themes, findings and implications. Annual Review of Sociology, 26, 1-20.

## **Principal Authors**

**David Schramm, M.S.**— Utah State University, Family, Consumer, and Human Development, Research Associate.

**James Marshall, Ph.D., L.M.F.T.**— Utah State University, Family, Consumer, and Human Development, Cooperative Extension Specialist.

**Victor Harris, M.S.**— Utah State University, Family, Consumer, and Human Development, Doctoral Candidate.

**Anne George, Ph.D.**— Utah State University, Family, Consumer, and Human Development.

## **Contributing Authors-Utah State University**

**Scot Allgood, Ph.D.**— Associate Professor

**Linda Skogrand, Ph.D.**— Assistant Professor

## **Project Directors-Utah State University**

**Glen Jenson, Ph.D.**— Professor Emeritus

**Thomas Lee, Ph.D.**— Professor

### **Suggested Citation:**

Schramm, D. G., Marshall, J. P., Harris, V. W., & George, A. (2003). Marriage in Utah: 2003 baseline statewide survey on marriage and divorce. Salt Lake City, UT: Utah Department of Workforce Services.

**For additional information regarding marriage strengthening efforts in Utah, visit [www.UtahMarriage.org](http://www.UtahMarriage.org)**

We are very grateful to former Governor Michael O. Leavitt and First Lady Jacalyn S. Leavitt for their efforts toward supporting marriage, which is one of the most fundamental of all institutions. Their initiative to launch the nation's first Governor's Commission on Marriage helped lay the groundwork for this study and similar others to be undertaken. They are some of the nation's principal governmental forerunners in promoting and implementing ways to strengthen marriages and families.

Additionally, we are grateful to Melanie Reese, Director of the Governor's Office on Families, and to Brent Barlow, the Chair of the Governor's Commission on Marriage. Together, and under the direction of former First Lady Jacalyn Leavitt, they provide the needed leadership in upholding the Commission's goals, which are to recommend and, where possible, help implement ways to promote and strengthen marriage, and increase awareness of the importance of marriage to our state's well-being. We wish to express appreciation to all members of the Governor's Commission on Marriage for their support of this and other endeavors to support and strengthen marriages in Utah.

Recognition and gratitude are expressed to the advisory group at Utah State University, which consisted of USU graduate students and professors, who compiled the research report. We are also grateful to the graphic design team and editors of the report. Thanks are also given to the dedicated and proficient staff in the Utah Department of Workforce Services for their support in completing this project.

A special thanks is also extended to Dr. Christine Johnson, Director of the Oklahoma State University Bureau for Social Research and to her team of analysts and interviewers for conducting the study in the state of Utah.

This complete report is also available free online; please visit [www.UtahMarriage.org](http://www.UtahMarriage.org)

