

Australian study says people marrying less

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Researchers from UQ's Institute for Social Science Research have found that marriage no longer enjoys the privileged status it once did.

Contributing to the change in status is an increase in couples divorcing, marrying later or not at all, having fewer children and different expectations, and experiences of intimate relationships.

One of the most dramatic social trends is the rapid rise in rates of de facto cohabitation, indicating a significant shift in attitudes towards intimate relationships outside of marriage.

Australian Research Council (ARC) Professorial Fellow, Professor Janeen Baxter, is leading two projects investigating these issues and is contributing to international understanding by investigating marriage and cohabitation patterns and experiences in Australia.

Working with Dr. Belinda Hewitt, Associate Professor Michele Haynes, Professor Mark Western, and PhD students, Sandra Buchler and Maelisa McNeil, Professor Baxter is developing new ways of understanding the changing significance of marriage.

Professor Baxter said the knowledge gained from these projects would lead to more effective social policies as well as new theories about the social organisation of [personal relationships](#).

"These projects examine why people are marrying less, separating and divorcing more, marrying at a later age, and increasingly marrying after

cohabiting and having children," Professor Baxter said.

"The changes we have witnessed suggest that while marriage is still an important social institution, it no longer enjoys the privileged status it once did as the only way for families and societies to organise intimate relationships and childrearing. The changes to marriage reflect deep changes in the values and organisation of modern societies.

"There are a range of important implications from these trends, including changes in [relationship quality](#) and [life satisfaction](#) for couples, and potential changes to the social determinants of health and wellbeing for adults and children."

The research combines state-of-the-art data from large-scale national longitudinal surveys, advanced statistical methods and modelling techniques, and in-depth qualitative research.

The projects are funded by grants from the ARC and the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Provided by University of Queensland

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