

Why young couples aren't getting married -- they fear the ravages of divorce

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With the share of married adults at an all-time low in the United States, new research by demographers at Cornell University and the University of Central Oklahoma unveils clues why couples don't get married – they fear divorce.

Among cohabitating couples, more than two-thirds of the study's respondents admitted to concerns about dealing with the social, legal, emotional and economic consequences of a possible [divorce](#).

The study, "The Specter of Divorce: Views from Working and Middle-Class Cohabitators," is published in the journal *Family Relations* (December 2011) and is co-authored by Sharon Sassler, Cornell professor of policy analysis and management, and Dela Kusi-Appouh, a Cornell doctoral student in the field of development sociology. (<http://bit.ly/sJqeFa>).

Roughly 67 percent of the study's respondents shared their worries about divorce. Despite the concerns, middle-class subjects spoke more favorably about tying the knot and viewed cohabitation as a natural stepping stone to marriage compared to their working-class counterparts. Lower-income women, in particular, disproportionately expressed doubts about the "trap" of marriage, fearing that it could be hard to exit if things go wrong or it would lead to additional domestic responsibilities but few benefits.

The study also found working-class cohabitating [couples](#) were more apt

to view marriage as "just a piece of paper," nearly identical to their existing relationship. They were twice as likely to admit fears about being stuck in marriage with no way out once they were relying on their partners' share of income to get by.

The authors hope that their findings could help premarital counselors to better tailor their lessons to assuage widespread fears of divorce and to target the specific needs of various socioeconomic classes.

Provided by Cornell University

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