

# Marriage not a protective mechanism among low-income urban women

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Marriage may not be the protective mechanism it was thought to be when it comes to poverty and child well-being among low-income urban young women, particularly those who have experienced trauma, finds a new study from Washington University in St. Louis.

"Marriage, per se, did not appear to buffer the likelihood of having other negative adult outcomes for women with children," said Melissa Jonson-Reid, professor at the Brown School and co-author of the paper, "Family Formation: A Positive Outcome for Vulnerable Young Women?" published in the August issue of the journal *Children and Youth Services Review*.

"We were not able to assess the quality of a partnership so there may be a few reasons for this," said Jonson-Reid, the Ralph and Muriel Pumphrey Professor in Social Work and director of the Center for Violence and Injury Prevention.

"It may be that young vulnerable women, particularly those with maltreatment histories, are not choosing positive partners from either the economic advancement perspective or the social support/relationship perspective or both," she said.

"It is also possible that the intermediary adolescent risky behaviors and [mental health issues](#) that many of these young women experienced are both related to early childrearing and related to negative adult indicators and that marriage is simply not a sufficient buffer for the risks," Jonson-

Reid said.

The analysis of [family formation](#) among 4,385 [young women](#) with childhood histories of poverty and/or maltreatment underscores the importance of preventing adolescent risk behaviors among low income and maltreated girls as well as early and unplanned births among vulnerable young adult women.

**More information:** Vered Ben-David et al. Family formation: A positive outcome for vulnerable young women?, *Children and Youth Services Review* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.05.021](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.05.021)

Provided by Washington University in St. Louis

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