

Marriage reduces depression in couples earning less than \$60,000 per year, study finds

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People who are married and earning less than \$60,000 per year in total household income have fewer symptoms of depression than comparable earning unmarried people, but for couples earning more, marriage doesn't show the same mental health benefits, according to a study co-authored by a Georgia State University researcher.

According to this study, people who have never been married and earn more than \$60,000 a year have fewer symptoms of depression than comparable earning married people.

The study examined data from the Americans' Changing Lives Survey, a national study consisting of interviews with 3,617 adults in the United States ages 24 to 89 at specific intervals over many years. The survey covers a wide range of sociological, psychological, mental and physical health items. The researchers analyzed responses from never married, married and newly married adults. The findings are published in the journal *Social Science Research*.

"We looked at the interrelationships between marriage, income and depression, and what we found is that the benefit of marriage on depression is really for people with average or lower levels of income," said Dr. Ben Lennox Kail, first author of the study and assistant professor of sociology at Georgia State. "Specifically, people who are married and earning less than \$60,000 a year in total household income experience fewer symptoms of depression. But above that, marriage is not associated with the same kind of reduction in symptoms of depression."

This study, among only a few to investigate whether psychological well-being in marriage varies by socioeconomic status, supports a theory called the marital [resource](#) model, which suggests the health benefits of marriage include the pooling of resources, such as finances and social support.

"For people who are earning above \$60,000, they don't get this bump because they already have enough resources," Kail said. "About 50 percent of the benefit these households earning less than \$60,000 per year get from [marriage](#) is an increased sense of financial security and self-efficacy, which is probably from the pooling of resources.

"Also, it's interesting to note, at the highest levels of [income](#), the never married fare better in terms of depression than the married. They have fewer symptoms of depression than married people. All of these are subclinical levels of depression, meaning the disease is not severe enough to be clinically referred to as [depression](#), but can nevertheless impact your [health](#) and happiness."

More information: Daniel L. Carlson et al. Socioeconomic variation in the association of marriage with depressive symptoms, *Social Science Research* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2017.12.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2017.12.008)

Provided by Georgia State University

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