

# WHY MARRIAGE WORKS FOR WOMEN

[Bill Donohue](#)

In 1928, sociologist W.I. Thomas maintained that “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.” It is true that perceptions, no matter how false, have real life consequences. This is certainly true in the way the public perceives the marital status of women. For the most part, the media and the pop culture put a negative spin on how marriage impacts on the life of women. This perception, however, is not based on reality.

Four astute researchers have released an impressive [study](#) that contradicts the conventional wisdom. “In Pursuit: Marriage, Motherhood, and Women’s Well-Being” is the work of Janet Erickson, Jean Twenge, Brad Wilcox and Wendy Wang. Erickson is a Fellow at The Wheatley Institute at Brigham Young University; Twenge is a professor of psychology at San Diego State University; Wilcox and Wang are sociologists affiliated with the Institute for Family Studies.

The study, published by the Institute for Family Studies and The Wheatley Institute, is based on a survey of 3,000 women aged 25 to 55 in the United States. It explored four important factors affecting women’s well-being: happiness, loneliness, physical affection and meaning and purpose.

The study was occasioned by a concern over declining fertility rates for women. In the late 2000s, 85 percent of 18-year-old women said they were likely to have children. In 2023, the figure dropped to 72 percent. This has serious ramifications for women and society. The report, however, brings good news to women who get married and start a family.

Married mothers are nearly twice as likely to report being “very happy” compared to single, childless women. Nearly half (47 percent) of married mothers and 43 percent of married

childless women say they are enjoying life, compared to 40 percent of unmarried mothers and 34 percent of unmarried childless women.

Married women are about half as likely as unmarried women to experience frequent loneliness. Only 11 percent of married mothers and 9 percent of married women report being lonely most or all of the time, compared to 23 percent of unmarried mothers and 20 percent of unmarried childless women. Moreover, unmarried women without children are the most likely to have difficulty making new friends.

Physical affection, judged by frequency of touching, is something that married women are more likely to experience than unmarried women. Almost half, 47 percent, of married mothers and 49 percent of married childless women report high levels of regular physical touch, compared to only 23 percent of unmarried mothers and 13 percent of unmarried childless women. For example, when it comes to hugs, kisses, holding hands, snuggling and cuddling, married women far outpace unmarried mothers and unmarried childless women.

A third, 33 percent, of married mothers and 30 percent of unmarried mothers strongly contend that their lives are valuable and worthwhile, though only 24 percent of married childless women and 20 percent of unmarried childless women feel this way.

The authors of this study come to the conclusion that "Marriage appears to offer a stabilizing and supportive context that lifts the burdens of motherhood, while strengthening happiness, connection and meaning."

It is for this reason that those who hold to traditional moral values need to trumpet this report. There are many reasons why a declining fertility rate is an ominous sign. It is imperative that we get the word out that the conventional wisdom on women and well-being is based on a distorted view of

reality. For more on this subject, see the work of Don Feder at [StopDemographicWinter.com](http://StopDemographicWinter.com).

Those educators, members of the clergy, political leaders and community activists who are pro-natalists, and are supportive of marriage and the family, properly understood, are in a position to set the record straight. When young women learn that marriage is in their best interest, they will be more inclined to take a fresh look at this subject, and hopefully go on to experience the joys of motherhood. It's a win for them and a win for society.