# THE STATE OF THE MARYLAND FAMILY

# A RESEARCH REPORT FROM THE



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#### A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT JEFFREY S. TRIMBATH

Dear Friend of the Maryland Family Institute,

Greetings from Annapolis. It is my pleasure to present to you the first research report from the Maryland Family Institute (MFI), entitled "The State of Maryland's Families." Written by sociologist and Maryland native **Dr. David Ayers**, the report makes one thing crystal clear: marriage matters to Maryland. When marriages fail to form, negative consequences ensue, especially for our young people.

The report deeply dives into the publicly available data for all twenty-four counties, and equivalents. It confronts the reality of family formation, and its correlation with a whole host of social pathologies. Nearly every challenge we face today — from crime, to poverty, to educational decline — bears a meaningful and enduring relationship with family formation. Finally, it offers common sense policy solutions that can help ensure better social outcomes for all Marylanders. This work is endorsed by **Delano Squires**, Maryland husband and father and leading social commentator who serves on MFI's Advisory Board.



In many ways, this report is the "case statement" for why we launched the Maryland Family Institute. We seek to build a Maryland where God is honored, life is cherished, families flourish, and religious freedom thrives. We will do this by equipping God's people to advance faith, family and freedom in Maryland's church, capitol, and culture. Our goal is to protect life, promote marriage, preserve religious liberty and protect parental rights. We are an organization whose commitments, like the founding of Maryland, are grounded in Christian conviction and principle. We will, however, work with Marylanders from all faith backgrounds, or none at all, to advance each part of our mission. As we do this with intensity and urgency, we'll enshrine faith, family, and freedom as undeniable, immovable parts of Maryland's laws and culture for generations to come.

We invite you to join with us in this effort by visiting MarylandFamily.org, signing up to receive updates, or making a tax deductible donation to support our work. More than anything, we seek your fervent and earnest prayers that the Lord would bless this mission. Our future, and the future for all Marylanders depends on it.

Cordially,

Jeffrey S. Trimbath, M.Div.

Hog & Trumball

President, Maryland Family Institute

Annapolis

# INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT MR. DELANO SQUIRES

#### Dear Friend of Maryland Family Institute,

Please accept my congratulations on taking hold of this new report, the State of Maryland's Families, from the Maryland Family Institute. I trust you will read the research, and see firsthand the vital connection between strong families and strong communities in the Old Line State.

On more occasions than I can count, I've made reference to the data that children raised in traditional nuclear families have better social outcomes than children reared in any other family structure. Indeed, the ultimate "privilege" for any child is to be raised by a married mother and father in a loving home. I often talk about this because



my own personal story reflects this truth. And as a social commentator, I've dedicated my life to pursuing and communicating the data, so that more children and families can benefit. That's what this report does.

The report that you now hold in your hands (or view on your screen) confirms this data yet again, specifically regarding Maryland.

But it's not enough to just read the data. We must act on it.

There are several steps we can take to formulate and pursue policies in Maryland that strengthen families.

First, promote the "success sequence" of finishing high school, getting a job, and getting married before having children as keys to avoid poverty.

Second, protect life from conception to natural birth, so that every person in Maryland sees children the way God intends–as blessings to be enjoyed, not burdens to be overcome.

Third, empower parents to choose schools-whether in a traditional public, public charter, private, or homeschool setting-that align with their values and set high academic standards for students.

Fourth, protect children from lewd and inappropriate material, whether in their schools, on their library shelves, or on their screens.

Fifth, affirm the reality that sex is established at conception and remains unchanged throughout natural life. That means boys and girls should not be given powerful drugs and life-altering surgeries because they believe they were born in the "wrong body."

Finally, it means protecting the religious freedom and conscience rights of all Maryland's citizens - whether on the job, in the community, or engaged in their house of worship.

In short, acting on the data in this report means pursuing the vision of the Maryland Family Institute. I am a proud married father of four children. I care deeply about their well-being and the well-being of their friends in our state. I've continued that work through the privilege of serving on the Institute's Advisory Board, and I look forward to how God will use the Institute, and this Report, for His glory in Maryland.

**Delano Squires** Advisory Board

## I. INTRODUCTION

# MARRIAGE MATTERS—THE WELL-ESTABLISHED CONNECTION BETWEEN MARRIED PARENT HOUSEHOLDS AND SOCIAL & INDIVIDUAL WELFARE

In our effort to improve the lives of our citizens—making them safer, more physically and mentally healthy, more prosperous, happier, less lonely or socially isolated, and so on—it seems that in recent decades we have looked to every kind of program and policy solution but what is often the most obvious and best supported by research. That solution is fostering strong families founded upon healthy, stable marriages.

It is not that there is no value in other policies and approaches designed to promote health and prosperity, reduce crime, educational success, and so on. Of course there is. It is not that there are no other social, cultural, economic, or political factors that foster human flourishing. Of course there are.

But ensuring that most citizens are integrated into sound families—that as many people as possible are benefiting from healthy marriages and as many children as possible are being raised in households headed by them—is vitally important, whether saying so is politically or culturally popular or not. The positive impacts of strong families, and the negative effects of their breakdown or absence, are seen across a wide range of critically important social and cultural outcomes. Moreover, where healthy families are not the norm in our communities, many other reasonable and noble initiatives to improve the lives of people individually and collectively will be less effective. Good families are foundational to a healthy society. Everyone benefits from them, even those who are not in them.

But many of our political leaders and cultural elites have been unwilling to publicly take a stand for promoting strong families where doing so means saying that some forms work better than others. They are often particularly reluctant to point out where social ills are clearly connected to family breakdown and pathology.

For example, many are ashamed to promote the triedand-true advice so many of us older folk were raised with, now called the "success sequence." That is, those who are less likely to be poor and more likely to prosper tend to: "get at least a high school education, work full time, and *marry before having children*" (emphasis added) [1].

Yes, it is true that doing this is going to be harder for some than others due to structural barriers and inequalities, just as this is true for forming strong marriages and families generally. But as Wilcox and Wang point out, forging a life based on marriage, education and hard work is especially important for those overcoming disadvantages. Such people who follow the success sequence are much more likely to prosper compared to those from similar backgrounds who do not [2]. Moreover, those who have overcome disadvantages by following this path will be more likely to enjoy all of the other benefits of being married and living in strong families, in their communities and in their personal lives.

Compared to those who are single, and perhaps especially those who are divorced or legally separated, adults in healthy marriages enjoy a number of advantages. Without getting into the many specifics as to why and how marriage fosters these positive outcomes, here, briefly, are some of the most important, all supported abundantly in social science research.

Married people are generally happier [3]. Married couple households are financially better off and less likely to be poor, as we shall see later in this report.

Married folk enjoy better physical and mental health, including longer life expectancies, and better self-rated health, and are less likely to suffer from loneliness [4]. Divorced men are much more likely to commit suicide than married men [5]. Married people are less likely to have domestic violence in their homes [6]. Married men are much less likely to commit other crimes than single men, and married households are less likely to suffer crime victimization [7].

Note that all of these have obvious, positive impacts on communities. More marriage means more prosperity and with this, more tax revenue and consumer spending that promotes business. It means fewer adults that need various forms of social assistance. More marriage means less crime and drugs, especially hard drugs. What promotes the wellbeing of adults is going to elevate the communities in which they live. That is just common sense.

And then there are the children who, as reams of social science research abundantly attest, do much better on average when raised in households headed by their married, biological parents. Children raised outside of married parent households are more likely to be poor, to have mental and physical health challenges, to engage in sex promiscuously and early and, if female, get pregnant out-of-wedlock. They are more likely to be delinquent or engage in other conduct problems including substance abuse.

They are on average less academically successful, and not as likely to get and remain married later in life [8]. And let us not forget that what impacts parents affects their children, for good or ill. Where marriage helps adults, it helps kids.

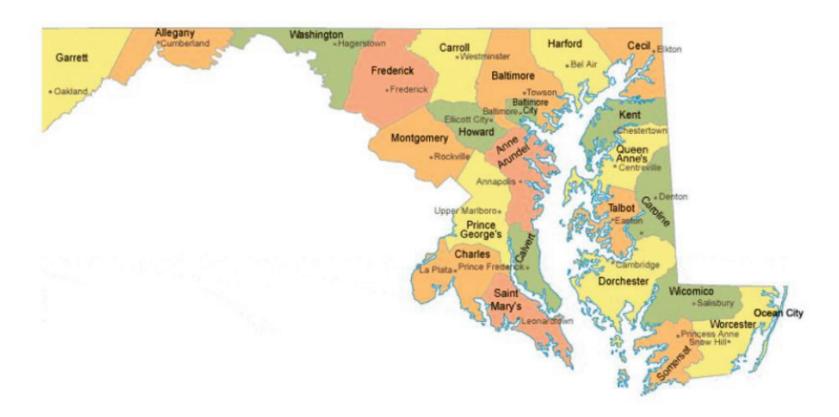
The fact is, raising children is hard and expensive work that must be sustained over a period of many years. It is much easier to do, and do well, with two parents bound to each other by marriage, and to their children biologically or through adoption. Other types of households can work well, just as having married parents is no guarantee that a child will succeed. Not all marriages are healthy, and not all married parents are good parents. Moreover, most single, step-, and cohabiting parents care about their children and take their parental duties seriously. But the marriage, two-parent, advantage for children is profound.

Again, all of these benefits of marriage for children are going to positively impact communities. Less children suffering crime and poverty, less pregnant teens, less young people learning to be dependent on public assistance, less hard drugs and delinquency, more students behaving well, and succeeding, in safer schools. Once more, this is common sense.

It is clear that people—adults and children alike—are better off the more they are tied into strong families headed by people in healthy marriages or at least embedded in communities where this is the norm. So how is Maryland doing? How much are its communities characterized by households headed by married couples, and how much are its children being born into them and otherwise raised within them? We will tackle that in the next section.

But before moving on, a quick note and a map. Throughout, we will be using tables to present data breakdowns for Maryland's 23 counties, plus the independent city of Baltimore. In these, counties are simply listed alphabetically, making it easier to find specific ones.

However, Maryland is a remarkably diverse state given its size, and the counties are commonly grouped by region, of which there are five that are quite distinct in many ways These are: Western (Garrett, Allegany, Washington), Capital (Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George's), Central (Anne Arundel, Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Carroll, Harford, Howard), Southern (Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's), and the Eastern Shore (Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset, Worcester, Cecil). Some readers may find it helpful to have a map of Maryland's counties as reference and context for the facts laid out in these tables. One from the Maryland Office of Tourism is provided on the next page [9].





# II. MARRIED COUPLE HOUSEHOLDS AND CHILDREN: HOW IS MARYLAND DOING?

Overall, based on U.S. Census data, Maryland is pretty close to United States averages for vital measurements related to marriage, children, and family. However, when we look at the state county-by-county, some counties are doing much better than the state and the nation as a whole, while some are doing much worse [10].

In this section, we will look at key, bottom-line figures describing the state. First, we will look at general realities pertaining to adults and households generally. Second, we will consider data points focusing on children.

#### **OVERALL**

Figure 1 looks at the percentages of households that are either headed by married or cohabiting couples, or by a single male or female, as of 2017-21 combined [11]. This compares the United States and Maryland. As can be seen here, Maryland is not substantially different from the U.S. as a whole. Less than half of Maryland households were headed by married couples, about the same percentage were headed by single men or women, and another six percent by cohabiting couples.

As Table 1 shows however, there are considerable variations across counties in these measurements. At one extreme is Baltimore City, where less than a quarter of the households were headed by married couples, while a whopping sixty-nine percent of households were headed by singles. Less than forty percent of households in Prince George's County were headed by married couples. In fact, ten of the twenty-four counties [13] have less than half married couple households. At the other extreme are counties such as Carroll or Queen Anne's, where sixty percent or more of the households are headed by married couples.

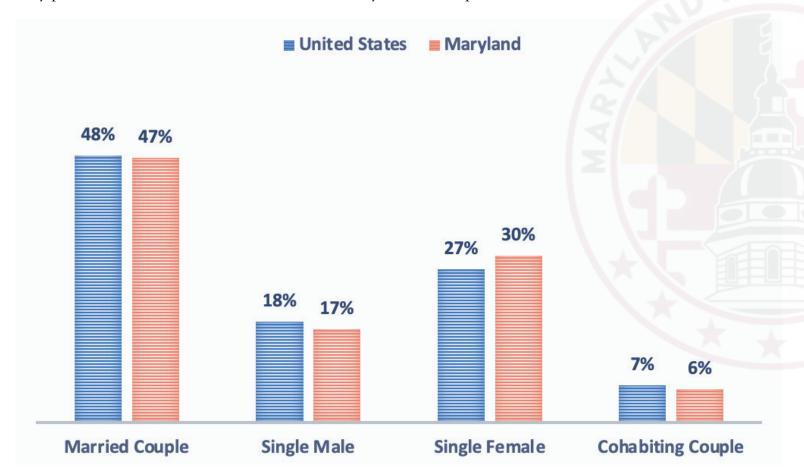


Figure 1: Percentages of Households by Type, U.S. vs Maryland, Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimate [12]

Table 1: Percent Households of Various Type, Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimate

COUNTIES	Married	Cohabiting	Male Headed	Female Headed
Allegany	42.5%	7.7%	21.1%	28.7%
Anne Arundel	53.7%	5.7%	15.6%	24.9%
Baltimore (County)	44.7%	5.7%	16.7%	32.9%
Baltimore (City)	24.0%	7.4%	24.8%	43.9%
Calvert	59.4%	6.8%	13.7%	20.1%
Caroline	51.4%	7.5%	14.6%	26.4%
Carroll	63.2%	5.2%	12.6%	19.1%
Cecil	52.7%	7.2%	16.9%	23.2%
Charles	52.2%	5.7%	13.7%	28.4%
Dorchester	44.0%	5.8%	14.3%	36.0%
Frederick	56.7%	6.9%	14.6%	21.8%
Garrett	51.3%	5.9%	18.1%	24.6%
Harford	57.7%	6.2%	13.6%	22.5%
Howard	58.7%	4.5%	13.4%	23.4%
Kent	43.3%	6.5%	19.3%	30.8%
Montgomery	54.2%	4.9%	14.0%	26.9%
Prince George's	39.2%	5.9%	18.7%	36.2%
Queen Anne's	60.3%	5.0%	14.8%	19.9%
St. Mary's	54.0%	6.3%	17.4%	22.3%
Somerset	44.8%	5.1%	17.3%	32.8%
Talbot	48.8%	6.2%	16.1%	28.8%
Washington	48.4%	7.9%	17.8%	25.9%
Wicomico	40.8%	9.2%	17.2%	32.7%
Worcester	50.0%	5.4%	15.1%	29.5%

Figures 2a-2f break down the marital status of individuals. Here, the focus is on males, then females, by age groups from twenty to fifty-four years of age, comparing 5-year estimates for 2006-10 with 2017-21 [14]. Although widows are certainly an important category, for what this report focuses on in terms of the health of families, the statuses considered are married (and not separated), never married, and divorced or separated.

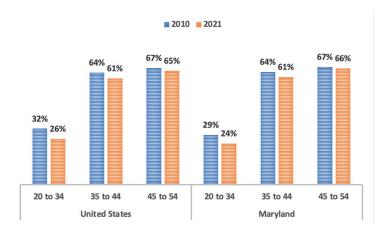


Figure 2a: Married males

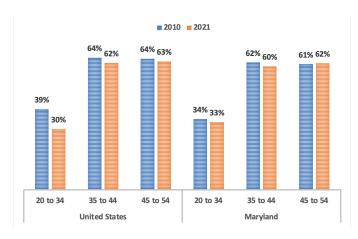


Figure 2b: Married females

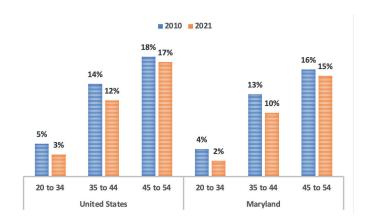


Figure 2c: Divorced or separated males

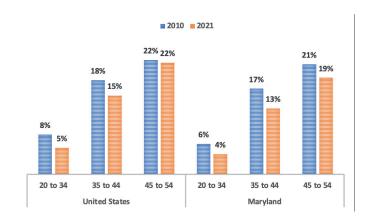


Figure 2d: Divorced or separated females

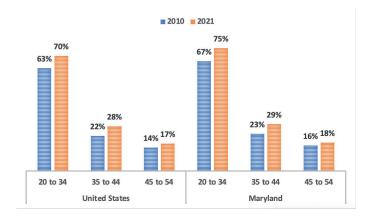


Figure 2e: Never married males

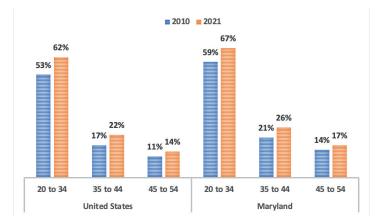


Figure 2f: Never married females

Some general points based on these figures are worth noting here.

First, the reader will notice that, even in this short time frame, the percentages in each of these age groups who have never been married have increased substantially. This is especially dramatic among those in the 20-to-34-year age group. With this, we see some declines in those who are currently married, especially for those 20-to-34. While it is great that the percentages who are divorced or separated have somewhat declined, much of this positive development is partially caused, and offset, by the rising proportions of those who have never married. After all, one cannot get divorced or separated if one is not married first.

Maryland's rising percentages of never married and decline in those who are married, especially among those who are younger adults, are consistent with a sharp national decline in marriage rates. Maryland's marriage rate for women ages 15 and up dropped from 17 to 12.8 between 2011 and 2021, a significant decline. Maryland's marriage rate is now tied with New York's for 43rd place among all fifty states plus D.C. and Puerto Rico [15].

This is also consistent with a dramatic rise in median age at first marriage nationally [16]. American Community Survey 1-year estimates for 2021 show Maryland having higher median age at first marriage than the U.S. average, but not by much. For men, it is 31.3 versus 30.6 for the United States, while for women those figures are 29.7 versus 28.6, respectively.

As Table 2 shows, the variation between counties in percentages of never married residents is quite dramatic. For example, in Baltimore City eighty-two percent of males ages 20-34 have never been married. Somerset is not far behind. But in Garrett County that figure is fifty six percent, and sixty-five percent in Queen Anne's County—both much lower than the state average of seventy-five percent, and the national average of about seventy percent.



Table 2: Percentage Never Married, by Age and Sex, Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimate

		MAL	ES		_FEMALES	
COUNTIES	<u>20-34</u>	<u>35-44</u>	<u>45-54</u>	<u>20-34</u>	<u>35-44</u>	<u>45-54</u>
Allegany	73.4%	40.0%	25.0%	61.6%	23.5%	7.6%
Anne Arundel	68.6%	20.9%	13.8%	56.5%	18.9%	10.5%
Baltimore (County)	74.6%	28.2%	16.4%	68.0%	26.0%	17.4%
Baltimore (City)	82.1%	49.9%	37.7%	79.2%	49.1%	38.4%
Calvert	69.9%	19.2%	11.6%	59.1%	16.7%	11.2%
Caroline	72.1%	38.8%	13.5%	61.1%	26.1%	6.3%
Carroll	66.4%	19.4%	6.6%	55.2%	12.0%	3.6%
Cecil	63.8%	23.8%	16.3%	56.4%	21.4%	8.4%
Charles	71.3%	26.3%	15.2%	62.4%	26.3%	15.4%
Dorchester	73.8%	26.9%	15.2%	70.3%	37.6%	10.0%
Frederick	67.8%	19.7%	13.7%	57.5%	15.5%	9.8%
Garrett	56.1%	27.5%	10.7%	48.6%	21.6%	7.0%
Harford	68.8%	20.8%	9.9%	61.9%	18.8%	10.2%
Howard	73.6%	20.1%	9.4%	62.6%	15.3%	10.6%
Kent	70.9%	27.4%	21.8%	67.0%	30.0%	21.8%
Montgomery	72.2%	22.2%	12.4%	64.0%	19.4%	12.9%
Prince George's	78.5%	37.9%	24.7%	73.2%	37.4%	26.0%
Queen Anne's	65.1%	22.5%	7.7%	60.7%	16.1%	4.4%
St. Mary's	70.8%	26.1%	11.1%	58.4%	18.0%	11.4%
Somerset	80.1%	50.5%	36.8%	64.2%	31.7%	12.6%
Talbot	73.0%	24.4%	23.8%	59.8%	22.6%	18.8%
Washington	73.9%	33.4%	22.1%	60.6%	16.7%	12.7%
Wicomico	74.9%	28.1%	20.8%	76.0%	25.1%	13.9%
Worcester	73.2%	25.0%	18.0%	62.9%	21.0%	10.4%

We can expect more problems across a wide range of areas if less people are married. This was touched on in the first section of this report, and we shall see evidence of this in subsequent sections.

#### **CHILDREN**

#### Out-of-Wedlock Birth

If a necessary component of the success sequence is, as we have already noted, "marry before having children," then many Marylanders are not engaged in this sequence. As Figure 3 makes clear—like the rest of the nation—Maryland's percentage of babies who were born out of wedlock, for women who gave birth between age 15 and 50, rose slightly between the 2010 and 2021 ACS 5-year estimates, the most recent being thirty-sex percent. Note that Figure 3 then further differentiates babies born out-of-wedlock into those born to cohabiting couples and those who are not.

Note that this high proportion of out-of-wedlock babies born occurred in a state which has liberal abortion laws. Abortions are legal until viability, with no waiting periods or required counseling [17]. In fact, Governor Wes Moore signed recently legislation "enshrining abortion as 'fundamental right." (Unfortunately, Maryland is one of only three states that does not report their abortions to the Center for Disease Control [19], so figures and trends for the state's abortion could not be presented here.) Sadly, these data show that liberal access to abortion has not reduced out of wedlock births.

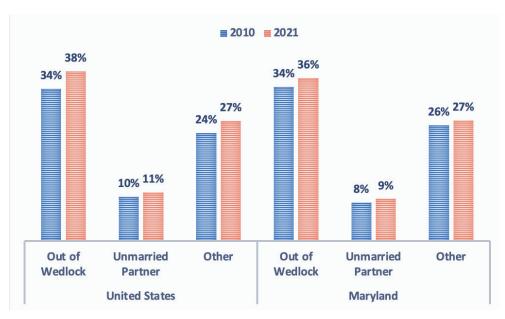


Figure 3: Percentages of Babies Born Out-of-Wedlock, Women 15 to 50, U.S. vs Maryland, Census ACS 2010 versus 2021 5-Year Estimates

Next, as Table 3 shows, the percentage of babies born out-of-wedlock varies dramatically between counties. For example, Baltimore City, as well as Allegany, Dorchester, Kent, Washington, Wicomico, and Worcester all can claim the dubious distinction of having more than half of their babies born out-of-wedlock. On the other hand, Calvert, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Queen Anne's, and Somerset are all at one-quarter or less.

	% Births	% Births	% Births
COUNTIES	Out-of-	Out-of-	Out-of-
33311123	Wedlock:	Wedlock	Wedlock:
	<u>Total</u>	<u>: Other</u>	Cohabiting
Allegany	53.5%	30.5%	23.1%
Anne Arundel	26.5%	17.2%	9.3%
Baltimore (County)	38.0%	30.6%	7.4%
Baltimore (City)	52.5%	41.6%	10.9%
Calvert	22.1%	13.2%	8.9%
Caroline	37.6%	30.2%	7.4%
Carroll	27.0%	20.4%	6.6%
Cecil	36.0%	29.8%	6.1%
Charles	36.2%	31.5%	4.7%
Dorchester	54.8%	37.9%	16.9%
Frederick	25.1%	14.0%	11.1%
Garrett	32.7%	15.3%	17.3%
Harford	24.3%	17.0%	7.3%
Howard	17.8%	14.0%	3.8%
Kent	51.5%	51.5%	0.0%
Montgomery	28.4%	20.4%	8.0%
Prince George's	47.9%	36.5%	11.4%
Queen Anne's	12.0%	9.4%	2.6%
St. Mary's	33.4%	28.5%	4.9%
Somerset	5.4%	1.3%	4.2%
Talbot	45.0%	43.9%	1.2%
Washington	51.8%	23.5%	28.3%
Wicomico	51.3%	39.3%	12.0%
Worcester	50.6%	39.2%	11.4%

Another important fact shown in Figure 3 is the proportion of out-of-wedlock births to cohabiting couples. For example, in the 5-year period ending in 2021, nine percent were. This also varies dramatically across counties, as Table 3 also makes clear. For example, in Allegany County, with fifty-three and a half percent of babies born out-of-wedlock, twenty-three percent were born to cohabiting couples versus thirty and a half percent to single mothers.

We are tempted to think that babies born to cohabiting couples face futures that are similar to those born to married parents. This is not true. While it is true that such couples are advantaged in having children because they can share finances and domestic work, at least when the baby is born, the fact is that they are far less stable [20]. As Richard Reeves and Eleanor Kraus pointed out, "two-thirds of cohabiting parents split up before their child reaches age 12, compared with one quarter of married parents." Moreover, they note, compared to those who are married, the pregnancies of cohabiting parents are much less likely to be intended, while the latter tend to be less educated and financially well-off [21]. As a result, children fare worse in such situations compared to children born to, and cared for by, married couples. The latter may break up, have unintended babies or financial hardship too—but they are far less likely to face these difficult realities. There are no substitutes to sealing a commitment of marriage with one's partner before undertaking bringing a child into the world.

#### Children in Non-Married Households

Figure 4, at right, shows that, when it comes to whether children in families are living with married parents or not, things did not change much from the late 2010's to that late 2020's. They also show Maryland's statistics that virtually identical to national averages. At any given point in time, about seventy percent of Maryland's children who were living in families were living in one headed by a married couple (though some of these stepfamilies).

Figure 5, at right, shows the percentages of children under 18 who were living in households where the householder was living with an unmarried partner. This shows, for example, that in the latest ACS 5-Year Estimate, seven percent of Maryland's children were living in such a household [23].

Figure 5: Percentages of Children Under 18 in Households Living with Cohabiting Couple, U.S. vs Maryland, Census ACS 2010 versus 2021 5-Year Estimates

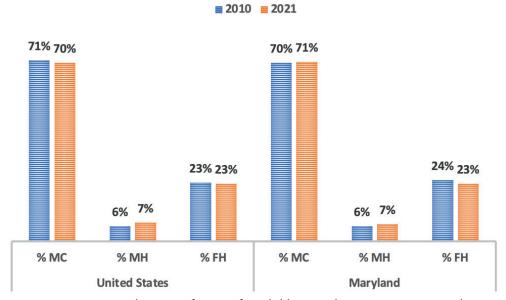
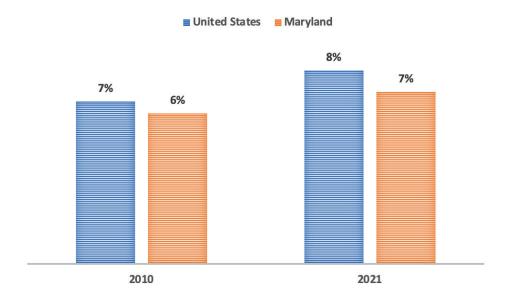


Figure 4: Marital Status of Home for Children Under 18 Living in Families, U.S. vs Maryland, Census ACS 2010 versus 2021 5-Year Estimates[22]



The pictures shown in Figures 4 and 5 are more hopeful than reality. The fact is, "children under 18" includes all children from infancy through age 17. Those who are younger, including those in married couple households, are at great risk of seeing their current parental situation change. The household they are living in when they are recorded by the Census American Community Surveys is not necessarily what they will be living in through the time they turn 18. Many children who are now in married couple households will see their parents get divorced and separate. For example, one study found that over one-quarter of children born to married mothers of low, or moderate, education in the United States experience at least one such transition before they turn 12. For mothers with higher educational attainment this was eighteen percent [24]. One can only imagine what the picture is like by age 17. Many of these children in the "married couple households" have already been through one or more transitions in household structure, and many who have not, will.

And when parents get divorced, the children will often move not just to single parent or stephouseholds, but into those headed by their guardian and his or her live-in lover. John Hopkins University family sociologist Andrew Cherlin calls this increasing cycle of children going from living with two married parents, through divorce, single parent, cohabitation, parental remarriage, and so on the "marriage-go-round" [25]. He points out, accurately, that this is devastating for children.

The instability picture appears to be even worse for children born to cohabiting parents. In the United States, one study showed that between forty-one and forty-nine percent (depending on the mother's educational level) went through at least one such transition by age 12.

The transition picture is still more dismal for children born to single mothers. Here, almost all go through a transition in household type by age 12, with the mean number of such transitions averaging from 1.52 to 1.66 depending on the level of mother's education. In fact, among children born to single mothers of moderate education, forty-two percent will deal with this two or more times prior to age 12 [26].

As Table 4 makes clear, there is a lot of variation among Maryland counties in percentages of children living in various types of households. For example, in Baltimore City, only forty-one percent of children live in a household headed by a married couple. On the other side, in Anne Arundel, Calvert, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, and St. Mary's counties the percentages living with a married couple rests roughly around three-quarters or higher. Similarly, the variation in children living in households with cohabiting couples is also significant. For example, that figure is between eleven and thirteen percent in Washington, Allegany, and Caroline counties, but only three percent in Howard, and five percent in Montgomery, counties.

	1			
COUNTIES	Married	Male- Headed	<u>Female-</u> Headed	Cohabiting Couple
Allegany	62.7%	8.9%	28.4%	12.2%
Anne Arundel	76.8%	6.0%	17.2%	6.3%
Baltimore (County)	68.4%	7.1%	24.4%	6.3%
Baltimore (City)	45.4%	8.3%	46.2%	9.6%
Calvert	78.6%	8.0%	13.4%	7.8%
Caroline	64.9%	6.6%	28.4%	10.9%
Carroll	82.0%	5.7%	12.3%	5.6%
Cecil	73.8%	6.6%	19.6%	8.7%
Charles	70.4%	6.8%	22.7%	6.6%
Dorchester	45.7%	19.4%	34.9%	N/A
Frederick	76.7%	7.0%	16.4%	7.1%
Garrett	70.1%	8.0%	21.9%	N/A
Harford	77.1%	6.4%	16.4%	7.3%
Howard	81.9%	3.2%	14.9%	3.4%
Kent	59.5%	8.6%	31.9%	N/A
Montgomery	78.6%	5.3%	16.0%	4.8%
Prince George's	62.4%	9.1%	28.6%	9.5%
Queen Anne's	80.1%	3.0%	16.9%	6.2%
St. Mary's	74.4%	6.1%	19.4%	7.1%
Somerset	64.9%	6.1%	29.0%	N/A
Talbot	74.9%	4.9%	20.2%	N/A
Washington	64.9%	10.6%	24.5%	12.6%
Wicomico	58.1%	8.7%	33.2%	12.4%
Worcester	68.8%	4.3%	26.9%	6.6%

Table 4: Percentage of Children in Families Living with Married Couple, Male- or Female Headed. Also, Percentages Living with Cohabiting Couples. Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimate [27]

#### Conclusion

Maryland has stuck very close to national averages in household structure. However, within the state there are large variations, with some counties doing dramatically better than the state, and nation, while others are doing much worse.

As we discussed in Section 1, adults and children separated from marriage are at higher risk for a host of serious problems. These impact not only individuals and families but also the larger community. It is reasonable that these differences will be reflected in and associated with the level of various problems across Maryland's counties. We will be looking at these problems, as they impact Maryland and its counties, in subsequent sections.

One of the most dramatic of these negative correlations, long-associated with single-parent families, is poverty. In various ways and for multiple reasons, significant income challenges are literally "baked into" single parent household reality for most people living it. Many single mothers are not in the envious position of being well-off and powerful such as the character depicted by Candace Bergen in that famous final episode of Season 4 of Murphy Brown that led to so much commentary in the 1990's. This powerful connection between single parent households, lower income, and poverty is a critical reality that in turn impacts many other aspects of human flourishing. We will explore income, poverty, and family in the next section of this report.



### III. INCOME AND POVERTY

No matter how much pundits and policy makers sometimes try to wish it away, the financial advantages to marriage, compared to being single, divorced, and separated—are among the most well-established relationships in the social sciences. It is true that the associations between finances and related factors such as unemployment, with marriage, go both ways. Challenges such as poverty or even tight incomes, chronic unemployment, less certain or marginal employment, and so on certainly make it harder for folk to marry, or at least to feel safe and comfortable making that leap. The role of male unemployment in discouraging marriage, essentially making many men less "marriageable" to women, was explored, for example, in William Julius' Wilson's classic The Truly Disadvantaged [28]. But the huge differences in income, including poverty, by marital status are not just due to the fact that financially privileged and secure people are more likely to get married.

As Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher pointed out in their classic The Case for Marriage, drawing on well-established research that continues to hold up well [29], there are many practical reasons that married people do better financially, all other things being equal. These include access to two incomes, often two inheritances, accumulated savings and investments over time (including insurance, social security, pensions and so forth), and potential support from both partners' extended families. Married people are better able to divide labor, specialize, and so be successful. They can share and handle risk and calamity better as well, since one partner can "cover" for the other in case of job loss, an entrepreneurial venture that takes a while to realize substantial returns, and so on.

Not to mention the fact that it is cheaper for two people to live together than it is for them to have separate residences [30]. And, as W. Bradford Wilcox has established, compared to single men, married males are generally more productive, focused, and efficient at earning more money [31]. Finally, to the extent that marriage is associated with better physical and mental health, this also has positive financial repercussions.

Figure 5, at right, shows, for the United States versus Maryland, the median family income differences in 2021 inflation adjusted dollars, using the Census' ACS 5-year estimates, for homes headed by married couples versus single males or females. This combines families who both do and do not include dependent children.

Here, we can see that Maryland is more prosperous than the national average, and that this advantage shows up within each type of family household. Neverthe-less, the degree to which families headed by married couples have higher median incomes is dramatic.

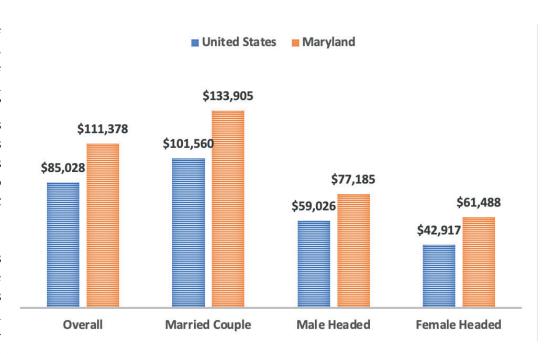


Figure 5: Median Family Income in 2021 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars, by Family Structure, U.S. vs Maryland, Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates

Table 5, below, shows the realities illustrated in Figure 6 by county. Obviously, some counties are much more prosperous than others, and this is reflected across each household type. And yet, in every county, married couple households have much higher median incomes. It is not even close.

COUNTIES	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Married</u>	Male Headed	Female Headed
Allegany	66,549	78,286	51,214	31,883
Anne Arundel	125,907	142,081	91,383	74,261
Baltimore (County)	102,411	124,356	73,615	60,135
Baltimore (City)	67,462	103,704	53,897	43,492
Calvert	136,948	151,856	93,110	66,381
Caroline	75,487	87,568	54,215	39,090
Carroll	121,581	132,463	77,963	69,063
Cecil	96,571	107,119	80,362	50,574
Charles	120,704	141,097	94,969	73,849
Dorchester	72,610	88,216	48,547	39,893
Frederick	123,503	139,386	90,575	56,038
Garrett	70,512	86,624	50,588	37,831
Harford	116,268	132,673	79,992	60,337
Howard	154,703	172,412	115,962	80,530
Kent	92,164	112,656	76,944	34,668
Montgomery	140,347	164,826	87,228	72,553
Prince George's	106,626	129,020	79,032	76,466
Queen Anne's	117,432	128,112	91,667	58,006
St. Mary's	118,328	138,600	94,277	45,938
Somerset	61,961	77,605	15,184	35,085
Talbot	96,226	109,937	65,345	51,153
Washington	84,024	100,236	65,435	39,847
Wicomico	77,278	94,600	63,533	41,386
Worcester	91,138	99,667	64,737	49,455
		•	•	

Table 5: Median Family Income by Marital Status of Householder, Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimate

This can all become particularly tragic, and negative in its consequences for individuals but also for communities, counties, and states, as it impacts children. Children in households headed by married couples are far better off financially, and much less likely to suffer from poverty, certainly compared to those in single parent, and especially female-headed, homes. This reality is behind the long-standing term, and insights associated with it, first advanced by Diana Pearce in 1978, namely "the feminization of poverty." That is, that poverty has become increasingly associated with female-headed homes, particularly those caring for children [32]. This exploded especially following the 1960's and remains a profound issue today. The notion that this so-called "gender gap" in poverty can be fixed without decreasing the numbers of singles raising children on their own is a pipe dream. Certainly, many policies, including addressing any gender wage discrimination, can ameliorate the financial challenges of, for example, women raising children on their own. Indeed, we should do everything in our power to, realistically and wisely, improve the condition of single parents. But none are or will ever be a substitute for committed married partners sharing tremendous task, and expense, of raising children.

It is admitted that cohabiting couples enjoy some of the financial advantages married couples have, which can be of some benefit to any coresident children in their households. But this is not enough to completely close the gap with married folk. Both mutual commitment and stability enhance the financial benefits of marriage and, as we have already covered, cohabitation has, on average, less of each. For example, the 2020 U.S. Census recorded that, for those caring for children under 18, the median personal earning of cohabiting parents was \$31,686 where they were raising joint biological children with their partners, and \$37,100 where the child(ren) in their household was (were) not the joint biological child(ren) with their partners. This compares with median personal earnings of \$56,215 for married parents raising children under 18. advantage of marriage over cohabitation is, on average, substantial [33].

Census data for Maryland, once again using 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, clearly show the strong connection between the marital status of parents, and both the median income and percent below poverty for households with children under 18 in the Free State.

This is evident, first, in Figure 6, below. Notice the dramatic differences in median income among families with children under 18. As mentioned earlier, Maryland is more prosperous than national averages. Yet the degree to which the families headed by married couples do better, nationally and in Maryland, is eye-popping. In Maryland, the median income of families with children headed by married couples is more than three times higher compared to those headed by women.



Figure 6: Median Income in Last 12 Months, in Families with Children Under 18, by Family Structure, U.S. vs Maryland, Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates

Table 6, on the following page, presents these figures by county. Notice that in every one of them, the financial advantages of marriage for families with dependent children is dramatic. Even in wealthy Howard County, the median income of families with children under 18 is almost three times higher for those headed by married couples compared to those that are female headed.

Table 6: Median Income for Families with Children Under 18, by Family Type, Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimate

COUNTIES         Overall         Married         Male Headed         Female Headed           Allegany         59,460         87,020         50,036         26,049           Anne Arundel         128,564         149,052         91,080         53,822           Baltimore (County)         101,164         137,492         56,275         45,502           Baltimore (City)         54,059         113,675         46,499         30,779           Calvert         141,745         160,813         85,982         68,049           Caroline         65,980         93,354         46,250         34,506           Carroll         133,187         145,804         61,026         60,447           Cecil         97,436         111,768         66,105         32,970           Charles         118,266         142,930         77,578         55,174           Dorchester         52,928         95,037         37,438         31,050           Frederick         123,994         145,650         83,796         45,758           Garrett         63,857         94,609         51,328         32,093           Harford         121,340         145,385         71,922         40,050           Ho					
Anne Arundel         128,564         149,052         91,080         53,822           Baltimore (County)         101,164         137,492         56,275         45,502           Baltimore (City)         54,059         113,675         46,499         30,779           Calvert         141,745         160,813         85,982         68,049           Caroline         65,980         93,354         46,250         34,506           Carroll         133,187         145,804         61,026         60,447           Cecil         97,436         111,768         66,105         32,970           Charles         118,266         142,930         77,578         55,174           Dorchester         52,928         95,037         37,438         31,050           Frederick         123,994         145,650         83,796         45,758           Garrett         63,857         94,609         51,328         32,093           Harford         121,340         145,385         71,922         40,050           Howard         162,445         181,703         100,417         63,634           Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery	COUNTIES	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Married</u>	Male Headed	Female Headed
Baltimore (County)         101,164         137,492         56,275         45,502           Baltimore (City)         54,059         113,675         46,499         30,779           Calvert         141,745         160,813         85,982         68,049           Caroline         65,980         93,354         46,250         34,506           Carroll         133,187         145,804         61,026         60,447           Cecil         97,436         111,768         66,105         32,970           Charles         118,266         142,930         77,578         55,174           Dorchester         52,928         95,037         37,438         31,050           Frederick         123,994         145,650         83,796         45,758           Garrett         63,857         94,609         51,328         32,093           Harford         121,340         145,385         71,922         40,050           Howard         162,445         181,703         100,417         63,634           Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's	Allegany	59,460	87,020	50,036	26,049
Baltimore (City)         54,059         113,675         46,499         30,779           Calvert         141,745         160,813         85,982         68,049           Caroline         65,980         93,354         46,250         34,506           Carroll         133,187         145,804         61,026         60,447           Cecil         97,436         111,768         66,105         32,970           Charles         118,266         142,930         77,578         55,174           Dorchester         52,928         95,037         37,438         31,050           Frederick         123,994         145,650         83,796         45,758           Garrett         63,857         94,609         51,328         32,093           Harford         121,340         145,385         71,922         40,050           Howard         162,445         181,703         100,417         63,634           Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's	Anne Arundel	128,564	149,052	91,080	53,822
Calvert         141,745         160,813         85,982         68,049           Caroline         65,980         93,354         46,250         34,506           Carroll         133,187         145,804         61,026         60,447           Cecil         97,436         111,768         66,105         32,970           Charles         118,266         142,930         77,578         55,174           Dorchester         52,928         95,037         37,438         31,050           Frederick         123,994         145,650         83,796         45,758           Garrett         63,857         94,609         51,328         32,093           Harford         121,340         145,385         71,922         40,050           Howard         162,445         181,703         100,417         63,634           Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's         114,215         131,086         88,052         35,482           St. Mary's <td< th=""><th>Baltimore (County)</th><th>101,164</th><th>137,492</th><th>56,275</th><th>45,502</th></td<>	Baltimore (County)	101,164	137,492	56,275	45,502
Caroline         65,980         93,354         46,250         34,506           Carroll         133,187         145,804         61,026         60,447           Cecil         97,436         111,768         66,105         32,970           Charles         118,266         142,930         77,578         55,174           Dorchester         52,928         95,037         37,438         31,050           Frederick         123,994         145,650         83,796         45,758           Garrett         63,857         94,609         51,328         32,093           Harford         121,340         145,385         71,922         40,050           Howard         162,445         181,703         100,417         63,634           Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's         114,215         131,086         88,052         35,482           St. Mary's         118,676         143,263         82,302         40,142           Somerset <t< th=""><th>Baltimore (City)</th><th>54,059</th><th>113,675</th><th>46,499</th><th>30,779</th></t<>	Baltimore (City)	54,059	113,675	46,499	30,779
Carroll         133,187         145,804         61,026         60,447           Cecil         97,436         111,768         66,105         32,970           Charles         118,266         142,930         77,578         55,174           Dorchester         52,928         95,037         37,438         31,050           Frederick         123,994         145,650         83,796         45,758           Garrett         63,857         94,609         51,328         32,093           Harford         121,340         145,385         71,922         40,050           Howard         162,445         181,703         100,417         63,634           Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's         114,215         131,086         88,052         35,482           St. Mary's         118,676         143,263         82,302         40,142           Somerset         37,207         78,940         N/A         28,690           Talbot         98,	Calvert	141,745	160,813	85,982	68,049
Cecil         97,436         111,768         66,105         32,970           Charles         118,266         142,930         77,578         55,174           Dorchester         52,928         95,037         37,438         31,050           Frederick         123,994         145,650         83,796         45,758           Garrett         63,857         94,609         51,328         32,093           Harford         121,340         145,385         71,922         40,050           Howard         162,445         181,703         100,417         63,634           Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's         114,215         131,086         88,052         35,482           St. Mary's         118,676         143,263         82,302         40,142           Somerset         37,207         78,940         N/A         28,690           Talbot         98,016         130,242         70,904         37,614           Washington         7	Caroline	65,980	93,354	46,250	34,506
Charles         118,266         142,930         77,578         55,174           Dorchester         52,928         95,037         37,438         31,050           Frederick         123,994         145,650         83,796         45,758           Garrett         63,857         94,609         51,328         32,093           Harford         121,340         145,385         71,922         40,050           Howard         162,445         181,703         100,417         63,634           Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's         114,215         131,086         88,052         35,482           St. Mary's         118,676         143,263         82,302         40,142           Somerset         37,207         78,940         N/A         28,690           Talbot         98,016         130,242         70,904         37,614           Washington         78,891         112,995         48,658         30,360           Wicomico <t< th=""><th>Carroll</th><th>133,187</th><th>145,804</th><th>61,026</th><th>60,447</th></t<>	Carroll	133,187	145,804	61,026	60,447
Dorchester         52,928         95,037         37,438         31,050           Frederick         123,994         145,650         83,796         45,758           Garrett         63,857         94,609         51,328         32,093           Harford         121,340         145,385         71,922         40,050           Howard         162,445         181,703         100,417         63,634           Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's         114,215         131,086         88,052         35,482           St. Mary's         118,676         143,263         82,302         40,142           Somerset         37,207         78,940         N/A         28,690           Talbot         98,016         130,242         70,904         37,614           Washington         78,891         112,995         48,658         30,360           Wicomico         69,027         102,688         55,536         32,506	Cecil	97,436	111,768	66,105	32,970
Frederick         123,994         145,650         83,796         45,758           Garrett         63,857         94,609         51,328         32,093           Harford         121,340         145,385         71,922         40,050           Howard         162,445         181,703         100,417         63,634           Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's         114,215         131,086         88,052         35,482           St. Mary's         118,676         143,263         82,302         40,142           Somerset         37,207         78,940         N/A         28,690           Talbot         98,016         130,242         70,904         37,614           Washington         78,891         112,995         48,658         30,360           Wicomico         69,027         102,688         55,536         32,506	Charles	118,266	142,930	77,578	55,174
Garrett         63,857         94,609         51,328         32,093           Harford         121,340         145,385         71,922         40,050           Howard         162,445         181,703         100,417         63,634           Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's         114,215         131,086         88,052         35,482           St. Mary's         118,676         143,263         82,302         40,142           Somerset         37,207         78,940         N/A         28,690           Talbot         98,016         130,242         70,904         37,614           Washington         78,891         112,995         48,658         30,360           Wicomico         69,027         102,688         55,536         32,506	Dorchester	52,928	95,037	37,438	31,050
Harford       121,340       145,385       71,922       40,050         Howard       162,445       181,703       100,417       63,634         Kent       85,539       124,750       43,958       29,648         Montgomery       138,439       168,982       70,792       54,091         Prince George's       92,005       123,852       60,225       57,086         Queen Anne's       114,215       131,086       88,052       35,482         St. Mary's       118,676       143,263       82,302       40,142         Somerset       37,207       78,940       N/A       28,690         Talbot       98,016       130,242       70,904       37,614         Washington       78,891       112,995       48,658       30,360         Wicomico       69,027       102,688       55,536       32,506	Frederick	123,994	145,650	83,796	45,758
Howard         162,445         181,703         100,417         63,634           Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's         114,215         131,086         88,052         35,482           St. Mary's         118,676         143,263         82,302         40,142           Somerset         37,207         78,940         N/A         28,690           Talbot         98,016         130,242         70,904         37,614           Washington         78,891         112,995         48,658         30,360           Wicomico         69,027         102,688         55,536         32,506	Garrett	63,857	94,609	51,328	32,093
Kent         85,539         124,750         43,958         29,648           Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's         114,215         131,086         88,052         35,482           St. Mary's         118,676         143,263         82,302         40,142           Somerset         37,207         78,940         N/A         28,690           Talbot         98,016         130,242         70,904         37,614           Washington         78,891         112,995         48,658         30,360           Wicomico         69,027         102,688         55,536         32,506	Harford	121,340	145,385	71,922	40,050
Montgomery         138,439         168,982         70,792         54,091           Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's         114,215         131,086         88,052         35,482           St. Mary's         118,676         143,263         82,302         40,142           Somerset         37,207         78,940         N/A         28,690           Talbot         98,016         130,242         70,904         37,614           Washington         78,891         112,995         48,658         30,360           Wicomico         69,027         102,688         55,536         32,506	Howard	162,445	181,703	100,417	63,634
Prince George's         92,005         123,852         60,225         57,086           Queen Anne's         114,215         131,086         88,052         35,482           St. Mary's         118,676         143,263         82,302         40,142           Somerset         37,207         78,940         N/A         28,690           Talbot         98,016         130,242         70,904         37,614           Washington         78,891         112,995         48,658         30,360           Wicomico         69,027         102,688         55,536         32,506	Kent	85,539	124,750	43,958	29,648
Queen Anne's       114,215       131,086       88,052       35,482         St. Mary's       118,676       143,263       82,302       40,142         Somerset       37,207       78,940       N/A       28,690         Talbot       98,016       130,242       70,904       37,614         Washington       78,891       112,995       48,658       30,360         Wicomico       69,027       102,688       55,536       32,506	Montgomery	138,439	168,982	70,792	54,091
St. Mary's       118,676       143,263       82,302       40,142         Somerset       37,207       78,940       N/A       28,690         Talbot       98,016       130,242       70,904       37,614         Washington       78,891       112,995       48,658       30,360         Wicomico       69,027       102,688       55,536       32,506	Prince George's	92,005	123,852	60,225	57,086
Somerset         37,207         78,940         N/A         28,690           Talbot         98,016         130,242         70,904         37,614           Washington         78,891         112,995         48,658         30,360           Wicomico         69,027         102,688         55,536         32,506	Queen Anne's	114,215	131,086	88,052	35,482
Talbot       98,016       130,242       70,904       37,614         Washington       78,891       112,995       48,658       30,360         Wicomico       69,027       102,688       55,536       32,506	St. Mary's	118,676	143,263	82,302	40,142
Washington         78,891         112,995         48,658         30,360           Wicomico         69,027         102,688         55,536         32,506	Somerset	37,207	78,940	N/A	28,690
<b>Wicomico</b> 69,027 102,688 55,536 32,506	Talbot	98,016	130,242	70,904	37,614
	Washington	78,891	112,995	48,658	30,360
<b>Worcester</b> 89,337 106,959 110,347 36,047	Wicomico	69,027	102,688	55,536	32,506
	Worcester	89,337	106,959	110,347	36,047

As Figure 7 shows, differences in percentages of children in married and other households that are classified as being below the poverty level are no less dramatic. In Maryland, children in female-headed households are almost six times more likely to be poor than those headed by married couples.

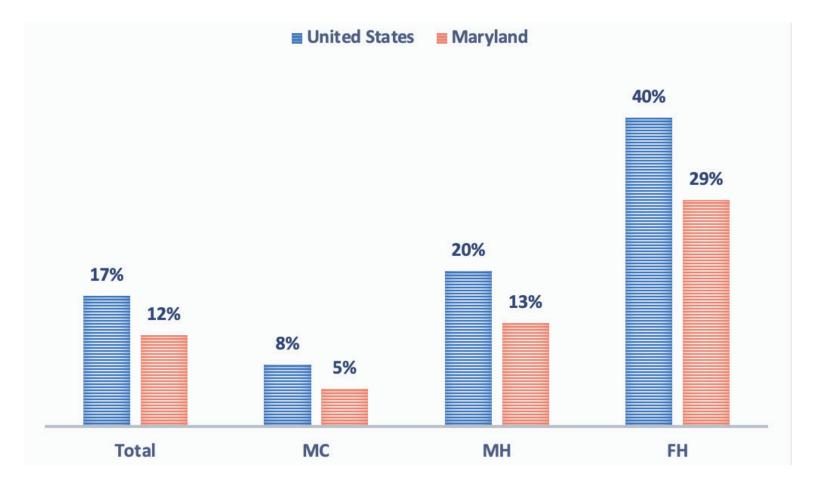


Figure 7: Percent of Children Below Poverty Level in Last 12 Months, by Family Structure, U.S. vs Maryland, Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates

Table 7 looks at these poverty levels by county. In prosperous Calvert County, where the poverty level for children living in female headed households is relatively low (about twenty percent) the latter are almost sixteen times more likely than those headed by married couples to be below poverty level. In Howard County, these are nine times different, in Frederick County, over seven and a half times different. Even in Baltimore City, which has high rates of poverty generally, compared to those in married couple households, children in female headed ones are almost four times more likely to be below poverty level.

Table 7: Percentages of Children Under 18 that are Below Poverty Level, by Marital Status of Householder, Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimate [24]

COUNTIES	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Married</u>	Male Headed	Female Headed
Allegany	17.3%	8.0%	8.2%	40.7%
Anne Arundel	6.9%	2.3%	5.1%	25.3%
Baltimore (County)	11.9%	5.7%	13.9%	26.1%
Baltimore (City)	27.7%	10.7%	25.2%	42.4%
Calvert	5.0%	1.2%	15.4%	19.1%
Caroline	17.9%	10.6%	25.7%	30.7%
Carroll	4.8%	1.6%	8.5%	22.3%
Cecil	13.7%	5.3%	16.7%	40.4%
Charles	8.0%	2.6%	18.3%	20.1%
Dorchester	24.6%	6.8%	28.7%	45.3%
Frederick	7.9%	3.5%	6.3%	27.3%
Garrett	10.4%	6.7%	20.1%	18.7%
Harford	8.0%	3.2%	7.6%	29.0%
Howard	6.6%	2.7%	9.7%	24.3%
Kent	14.4%	3.8%	19.1%	28.5%
Montgomery	8.6%	4.6%	9.7%	24.7%
Prince George's	12.3%	6.9%	10.5%	23.0%
Queen Anne's	9.1%	3.0%	3.5%	33.0%
St. Mary's	10.3%	2.3%	9.3%	39.1%
Somerset	31.1%	27.6%	78.2%	29.0%
Talbot	10.4%	0.8%	3.8%	39.7%
Washington	18.4%	6.3%	30.7%	42.7%
Wicomico	15.7%	5.9%	6.1%	35.1%
Worcester	14.5%	3.5%	21.1%	37.6%

As Figure 8 illustrates, children—nationally and in Maryland—are much more likely to be poor than adults, even than elderly people. This, as all of us across the political spectrum can admit, is sad, even deplorable. Yet, as comparing Figures 6 and 7, and Tables 6 and 7, helps us to see, if there were proportionally more children in homes headed by married couples, this would substantially reduce that twelve percent of Maryland children living in poverty.

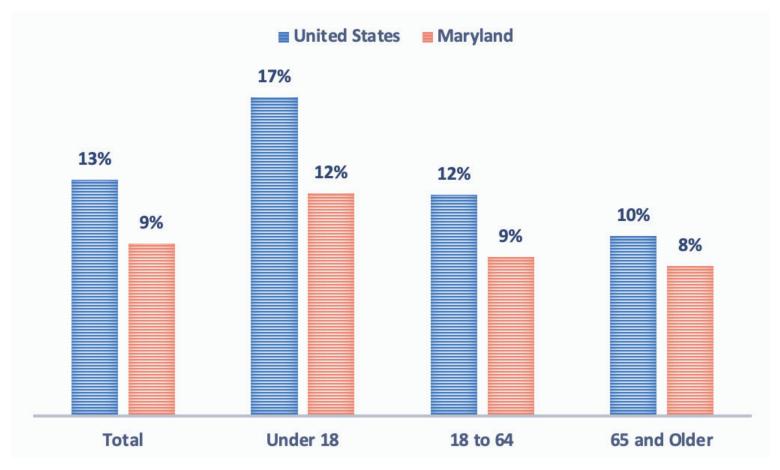


Figure 8: Individuals Below Poverty Level in Last 12 Months, by Age, U.S. vs Maryland, Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates

There is no county in Maryland where family structure did not matter significantly for the financial welfare of households and children. In each one, married couple households did far and away better than male- or female-headed ones. Figures 9a and 9b are scatterplots mapping the relationship between the percent of households with children that are below poverty level (vertical axis), with both the percentages that are headed by married couples, and by single females (horizontal axes). With "1.0" being a perfect correlation, these associations are highly statistically significant and powerful [35].

The more that are headed by married couples, the less that are poor. The opposite for female headed, and a scatterplot for male headed would show the same types of result. Especially here, with the welfare of children at stake, the degree to which child poverty is tied to family structure should not be ignored, explained away, or politicized by policy makers.

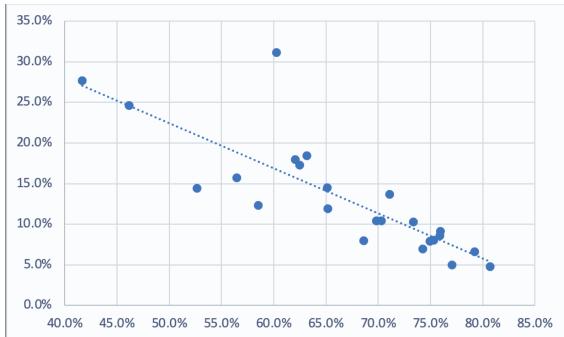


Figure 9a: Association Between the Percent of Children Living in Married Couple Households and the Percent of Children Below Poverty Level, Past 12 Months, Among Maryland Counties, Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates.

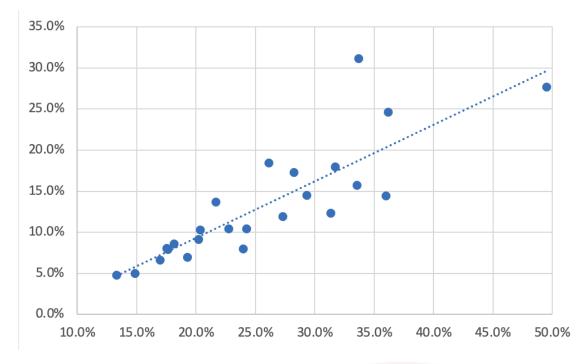


Figure 9b: Association Between the Percent of Children Living in Female Headed Households and the Percent of Children Below Poverty Level, Past 12 Months, Among Maryland Counties, Census ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates.

#### Conclusion

One would think that marriage advantages and non-marriage disadvantages in the areas of income and poverty that are this stark, this large, would create public outcry demanding cultural and political elites draw attention to this and encourage robust public and policy conversations focused on how we can better promote and strengthen marriage, especially for those raising children. One would be wrong. This needs to change, and soon. We can throw all the money and brain power we want at the problems being faced by unmarried parents and their kids, but if we do not address the flight from marriage itself, our efforts will not be nearly as successful as they otherwise could be.

If poverty is an important social pathology that needs to be addressed, crime is another. This has been pushed to the cultural and political foreground in the wake of escalating violent crime, especially in cities, over the past few years [36]. We will examine crime and violence in Maryland in the next section.

### IV. CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Reported Violent and Property Index Crimes

At least so far as the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data is concerned, compared to the United States as a whole, Maryland trends for violent and property crime rates [37] are not bad. For example, both trended down between 2019 and 2020, while the overall U.S. violent crime rate increased. Moreover, violent and property crime in Maryland has consistently been lower that the U.S. average for some time. These facts are clear in Figures 10 and 11. In a ranking of states using UCR data, out of 51 that includes all states plus the District of Columbia, Maryland ranks #24 in violent crime and #37 in property crime [38].

#### Rate of Violent Crime Offenses by Population

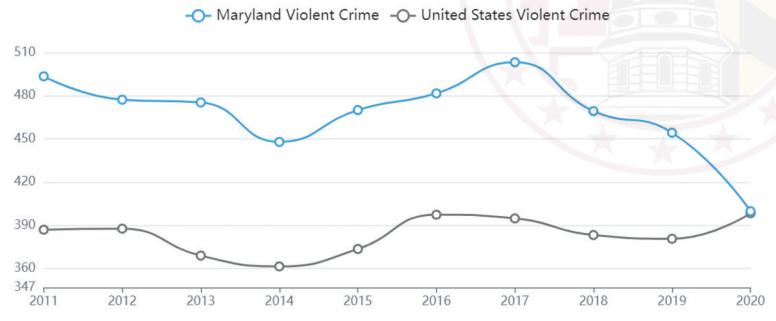


Figure 10: Uniform Crime Report Violent Crime Rate Trends for United States and Maryland, 2011-20. Chart generated on UCR Data Explorer. Rates are per 100,000.

#### **Rate of Property Crime Offenses by Population**

— Maryland Property Crime — United States Property Crime

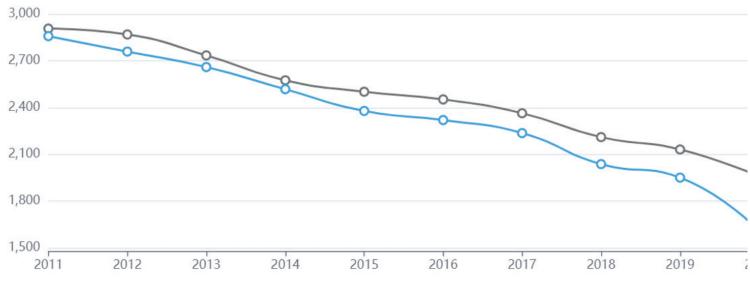


Figure 11: Uniform Crime Report Property Crime Rate Trends for United States and Maryland, 2011-20. Chart generated on UCR Data Explorer.

Table 8 shows the violent and property crime rates per 100,000 by county for 2020. This comes from the Maryland Crime Dashboard, which uses UCR data [39].

COUNTIES	Violent	<u>Property</u>
Allegany	331.4	1862.3
Anne Arundel	312.2	1480.6
Baltimore (County)	462.5	1961.3
Baltimore (City)	1610.6	3171.5
Calvert	151.2	783.8
Caroline	189.0	1187.9
Carroll	111.3	705.8
Cecil	264.8	1708.7
Charles	328.1	1293.4
Dorchester	652.1	2441.6
Frederick	171.2	849.6
Garrett	222.2	1017.5
Harford	160.7	706.1
Howard	120.7	1093.0
Kent	134.9	653.8
Montgomery	166.7	1404.8
Prince George's	346.9	1782.2
Queen Anne's	186.1	679.1
St. Mary's	188.5	1340.9
Somerset	283.0	1281.4
Talbot	294.7	995.1
Washington	316.0	1174.1
Wicomico	477.9	1643.6
Worcester	448.4	2494.7
		•

Though the relationship and research can be complicated, the overwhelming majority of studies suggest that marriage reduces the propensity to engage in crime [40]. Moreover, marriage greatly reduces the risk of crime victimization. For example, in 2021, as in every other year, violent crime victimization for never married, divorced, and separated each were much higher than for those who were married [41].

Figures 12a and 12b are scatterplots showing the relationship between both crime rates and the total percentages of households headed by married couples. As the percentages of households headed by married couples increases, both crime rates generally decrease [42], as we would expect.

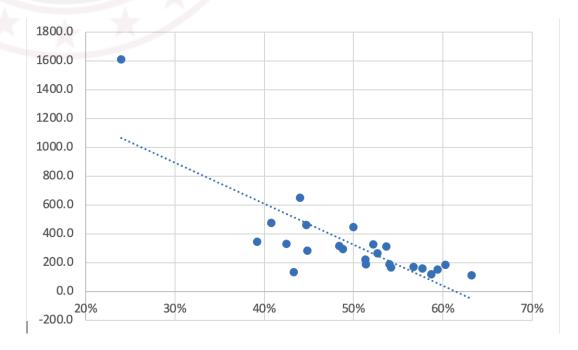
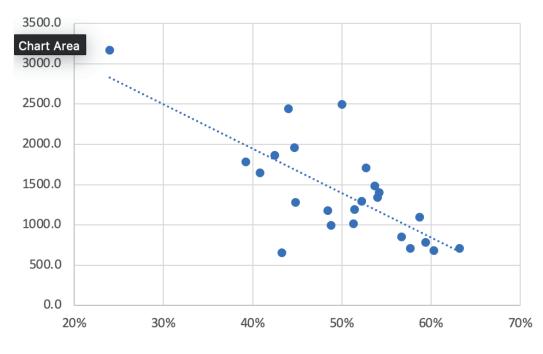


Figure 12a: Association
Between Percentage of
Households Headed by Married
Couples (ACS 5 Year
Estimates) and Violent Index
Crime Rates, Among Maryland
Counties, UCR, Maryland
Crime Dashboard



*12b*: Figure Association Percentage Between Households Headed by Married Couples (ACS 5 Estimates) and Property Index Crime Rates, Among Maryland Maryland Counties, UCR, Dashboard Violence Crime Among High School Students: Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a major component of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. This survey has been conducted every other year on private and publicly schooled students nationally since 1991. It is a treasure trove of information on the status and welfare of American high and middle school students. Moreover, results are broken down by state. And especially valuable here, Maryland maintains its own comprehensive YRBS website that provides access to all statewide and county results back to the 2012–13 survey through the most recent. The last YRBS (2021–22) surveyed over 35,000 Maryland high school students.

Survey items for high school students include several that clearly measure violence or threat of violence. Each of these items show large gender differences, and the results shown here are each for the gender with the highest incidences of each.

These are, carried a weapon (gun, knife, club, etc.) on school property in the last 30 days (male). Then, in the past 12 months: carried a gun for reasons other than hunting or sport (male), were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property (male), were in a physical fight on school property (male), were intentionally physically hurt by a dating partner (female).

Statewide versus national trends for these items are shown in Figures 13a-13e below. Not all are available for all of the years between 2010-11 and 2021-22. Thankfully, these show declining percentages in recent years, with the exception of females who had ever dated suffering dating violence, which has been roughly stable.

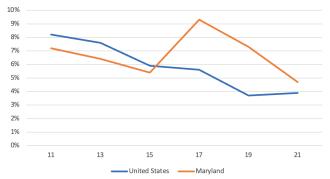


Figure 13a: Percentages of Males Carrying Weapon on School Property in Last 30 Days, High School Students, United States versus Maryland, YRBS 2011-21.

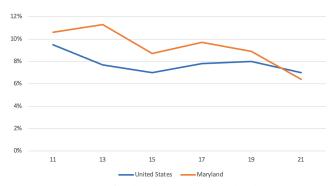
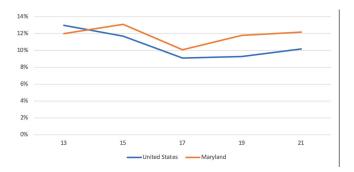


Figure 13c: Percentages of Males Threatened or Injured with a Weapon on School Property in past 12 Months, High School Students, United States versus Maryland, YRBS 2011-21.



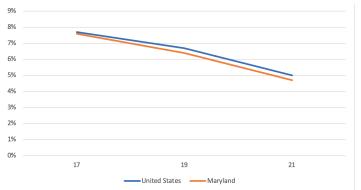


Figure 13b, above: Percentages of Males Carrying a Gun for Reasons Other Than Hunting or Sport in past 12 Months, High School Students, United States versus Maryland, YRBS 2017-21.

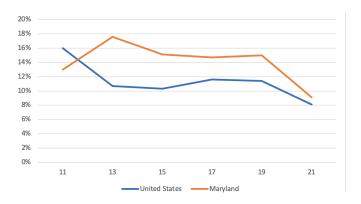


Figure 13d, above: Percentages of Males in a Physical Fight on School Property in past 12 Months, High School Students, United States versus Maryland, YRBS 2011-21.

Figure 13e, at left: Percentages of Females Deliberately and Physically Hurt by Dating Partners in past 12 Months, High School Students, United States versus Maryland, YRBS 2013-21.

In Table 9, we see the breakdowns in these five measures by county. These are for the 2018-19 survey year, as this corresponds best with all of the county-level data we have on family type and children, which are Census ACS 5-year estimates encompassing 2017-21. As was true in previous county tables in this report, the variation among these places is substantial. And despite the good news we saw in Figure 13, this table shows some disturbing levels of violence and disruption in some of these counties. For example, in Baltimore City, a quarter of the males had been in a physical fight at school, and another fourteen percent had been threatened or injured with a weapon, in the past 12 months. Or there is the fact that fifteen percent of high school females in Dorchester County who had dated had experienced dating violence in the past 12 months. Scanning this table shows the need for improvement, in some places more than others, in these outcomes.

COUNTIES	Weapon on School Property-Male	<u>Carried</u> <u>Gun-Male</u>	Threatened or Injured with Weapon-Male	Physical Fight at School-Male	<u>Dating</u> <u>Violence-</u> <u>Female</u>
Allegany	6.3%	7.3%	7.1%	12.5%	13.3%
Anne Arundel	6.9%	6.8%	8.7%	14.6%	12.2%
Baltimore (County)	8.6%	5.1%	11.0%	15.6%	14.8%
Baltimore (City)	14.5%	9.3%	13.6%	24.6%	14.2%
Calvert	5.5%	7.4%	8.0%	12.4%	10.6%
Caroline	6.1%	9.2%	15.4%	11.8%	14.6%
Carroll	5.3%	5.1%	8.1%	9.4%	11.4%
Cecil	5.8%	7.2%	8.4%	13.1%	14.5%
Charles	8.8%	9.3%	10.8%	17.1%	13.7%
Dorchester	9.9%	11.4%	14.6%	14.0%	15.0%
Frederick	5.7%	5.4%	8.1%	12.3%	10.2%
Garrett	8.7%	9.9%	9.8%	14.5%	12.3%
Harford	5.0%	5.9%	6.5%	12.5%	13.0%
Howard	4.2%	5.3%	7.0%	11.5%	6.9%
Kent	12.5%	12.1%	11.5%	16.7%	9.7%
Montgomery	5.1%	3.0%	5.4%	12.8%	7.9%
Prince George's	9.0%	8.9%	10.5%	18.5%	12.8%
Queen Anne's	5.6%	7.5%	10.3%	12.6%	9.6%
St. Mary's	5.6%	7.7%	9.1%	12.8%	11.9%
Somerset	10.8%	10.1%	7.2%	20.8%	16.3%
Talbot	5.9%	6.0%	5.8%	10.3%	9.7%
Washington	6.7%	6.7%	9.2%	13.3%	10.7%
Wicomico	9.6%	10.4%	13.4%	16.2%	12.5%
Worcester	7.7%	8.8%	10.2%	14.7%	9.9%

The relationship between each of these five outcomes, and the percentage of children in families who were living with married couples, was investigated using correlations. Table 9 shows each correlation and its significance, which held up when race was controlled where appropriate [43].

Weapon on School Property-Male	Carried Gun- Male	Threatened or Injured with Weapon- Male	Physical Fight at School- Male	<u>Dating</u> Violence- <u>Female</u>
825; Sig.	713; Sig.	710; Sig.	662; Sig.	540; Sig.
<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.006.

Table 10, above: Correlations Between the Percent of Children in Families Living with Married Couples, and the Five YRBS Outcomes Shown in Table 8, Among Maryland Counties.

Table 10 suggests that in counties where greater proportions of children live in families with married couples, there is lower likelihood of youth engaging in these negative behaviors or experiencing these violent outcomes. More investigation is certainly needed before firm conclusions can be drawn but this at least suggests that in some important ways Maryland high school students are safer in counties where more of the children in families are living with married couples.

One final note on this YRBS data. Sadly, there are serious gaps in Maryland YRBS data relative to that collected and made public by many other states. These include a measurement of whether students have ever seen someone shot, stabbed, or physically attacked in their neighborhoods. And inexcusably, Maryland currently excludes all three items addressing rape and sexual violence.

#### Conclusions

While Maryland property and violent index crime rates have improved, and the state has consistently done better in these than the nation as a whole, there is substantial variation among counties in how well they are doing. Moreover, county-level data shows a robust negative association between these crime rates and the percentage of the population living in married households. This is consistent with a great deal of evidence that, when it comes to crime, married people are much better off than those of other marital statuses.

YRBS items that directly measure some key aspects of violence experienced or engaged in by Maryland high school students are also instructive. On the one hand, across the state, on these measures, things have improved or at least not gotten worse over the past decade or so. On the other hand, there are dramatic differences among counties, some of which display disturbing percentages in some of these measures.

Obviously, where there is violence in schools and in their personal relationships, Maryland youth are going to find it harder to succeed academically and elsewhere. Safety for our kids must be, and is, a key priority. Moreover, there are relationships between key YRBS violence measures and the percentages of children living in married families. This suggests that in some ways, our high school students may be safer in counties where the latter are higher. This is at least something that should be explored, not ignored.

In the next section, we will look at some key mental health measurements statewide and by county. These are severe depression, sadness, suicide rates, ideation, and attempts. First, these are relevant because these conditions directly impact the welfare of Maryland's individuals and families. Second, these are relevant to this report, since it is important to explore to what extent these outcomes are correlated with family structure and marital status.

#### V. MENTAL HEALTH

Figure 14 shows the age-adjusted suicide rate for the United States and Maryland, 2010 versus 2021. While both increased over this time period, Maryland is in the enviable position of being consistently lower than the national average. In 2021, out of 50 states, only three had lower rates.

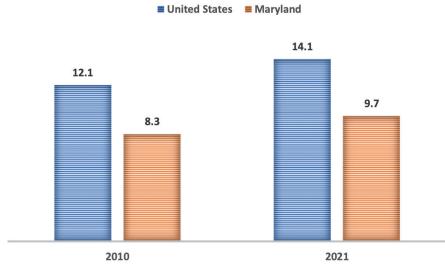


Figure 14: Age-Adjusted Suicide Rates per 100,000, 2010 versus 2021, United States versus Maryland, CDC [44]

Figures 15a and 15b show the rates of severe depression and frequent suicidal ideation for 2020 into 2023 combined, as documented by Mental Health America, based on over 4.5 million mental health screenings. Among those 18 and older, Maryland does better than the U.S. as a whole on both measures. For youth under 18, Maryland is close to the same as the U.S. on both.

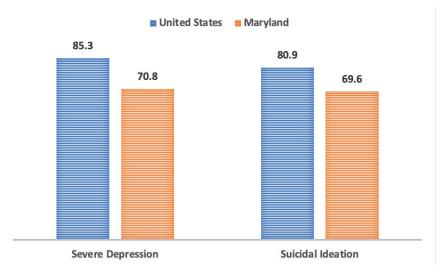


Figure 15a: Severe Depression and Frequent Suicidal Ideation Rates per 100,000, 18 and Older, 2020-23 Combined, United States versus Maryland, Mental Health America

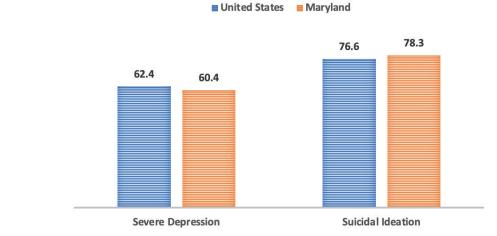


Figure 15b: Severe Depression and Frequent Suicidal Ideation Rates per 100,000, Younger than 18, 2020-23 Combined, United States versus Maryland, Mental Health America



Table 11 provides this data by county. Separating rates by age is not possible at the county level through this data source. As with so much else in this report, there is a great deal of variation within the state. On the depression rates, Calvert is the highest at 139.33, and Somerset is the lowest at less than half that—60.72. On frequent suicidal ideation, Frederick is highest with 137.25, compared to the lowest (again) being Somerset at 52.05.

COUNTIES	Severe Depression	Frequent Suicidal Ideation
Allegany	130.94	113.08
Anne Arundel	102.26	99.41
Baltimore (County)	121.35	107.81
Baltimore (City) <sup>45</sup>	N/A	N/A
Calvert	114.81	139.33
Caroline	136.43	130.22
Carroll	101.53	102.82
Cecil	113.19	110.28
Charles	125.09	98.50
Dorchester	112.60	109.38
Frederick	137.25	123.67
Garrett	134.73	115.01
Harford	128.78	122.19
Howard	124.64	107.74
Kent	91.64	66.65
Montgomery	116.44	100.62
Prince George's	107.75	99.53
Queen Anne's	82.53	88.87
St. Mary's	128.18	132.66
Somerset	52.05	60.72
Talbot	80.49	72.44
Washington	120.91	115.85
Wicomico	120.48	121.43
Worcester	109.97	125.14

Table 11: Severe Depression and Suicidal Ideation Rates per 100,000, 2020-23 Combined, All Ages Combined, Mental Health America

Not surprisingly, the rates for frequent suicidal ideation and severe depression are correlated powerfully with one another at .813 (with 1.0 being perfect), chance of error less than .001. However, neither is significantly correlated with any of the marital statuses of people in the population (married, divorced, separated, widowed, or never married), the percentage of married households overall or with children under the age of 18, percentages of children living in different types of households, and so on. Certainly, depression and suicidal ideation impacts families in which people are struggling with these serious problems, but marital status is not correlated with them at the county level so far as we could find given our range of variables here.

#### High School Students: Sadness and Suicidal Ideation & Plans

The YRBS has several questions that deal with suicide and sadness. The three tracked here are "during the past 12 months, did you": "ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?," "ever seriously consider attempting suicide?, "make a plan about how you would attempt suicide?"

Figures 16a-16c compare Maryland with the United States on these three items over time.

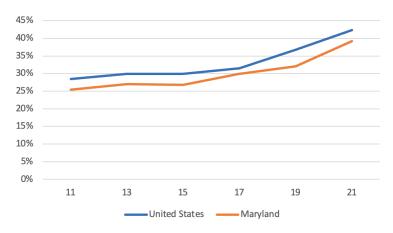


Figure 16a: Percentages Felt Sad or Hopeless in Past 12 Months, 2011-21, High School Students, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

Figure 16b: Percentages Who Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide in Past 12 Months, 2011-21, High School Students, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

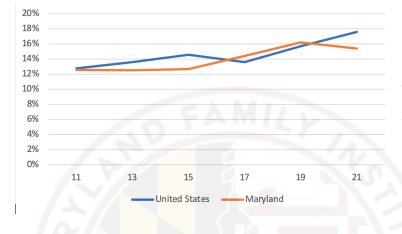


Figure 16c, at left: Percentages Who Made a Suicide Plan in Past 12 Months, 2011-21, High School Students, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

As we can see, all three worsened over this time period, nationally and in Maryland. And though mostly a bit lower, Maryland levels were not dramatically different from national ones. It is sad to consider so many young people struggling with thoughts like this, and know it is increasing.

Table 12 shows these percentages for 2018-19 [46] by county.

As Table 13 shows, there are significant negative correlations between the percentages of children in married couple families and all three of these negative outcomes measured in the YRBS [47]. Although this is only suggestive, it does seem that this relationship is worthy of further exploration and attention. These are critical negative outcomes with high school kids, they have been getting worse, and whether or not children benefit from being part of a married couple family may make a significant difference in kids' susceptibility to suicidal ideation, and to frequently struggling with sadness or hopelessness.

#### Conclusion

Steady increases in measured sadness or hopelessness, suicidal ideations, and plans, among Maryland high school students ought to be a matter of pressing and serious concern. Efforts to improve these should especially target schools and counties where the problems are worse, though obviously the welfare of all Maryland youth matters. The role of children enjoying the benefits of living in families headed by married couples should not be ignored or lightly dismissed. Not only does the latter appear to have a direct impact, but having two committed parents in the home almost certainly mediates the impact of other forces driving up these distressing percentages.

Closely related to this are problematic sexual practices (starting too early and having too many partners), and the abuse of alcohol and illicit drugs among Maryland youth. These problems will be explored in the next section.

Table 12: Percentages Expressing Being Sad and Hopeless, Making Suicide Plans, or Seriously Considering Attempting Suicide, In Past 12 Months, High School Students, YRBS, 2018-19

COUNTIES	Violent	Property
Allegany	331.4	1862.3
Anne Arundel	312.2	1480.6
Baltimore (County)	462.5	1961.3
Baltimore (City)	1610.6	3171.5
Calvert	151.2	783.8
Caroline	189.0	1187.9
Carroll	111.3	705.8
Cecil	264.8	1708.7
Charles	328.1	1293.4
Dorchester	652.1	2441.6
Frederick	171.2	849.6
Garrett	222.2	1017.5
Harford	160.7	706.1
Howard	120.7	1093.0
Kent	134.9	653.8
Montgomery	166.7	1404.8
Prince George's	346.9	1782.2
Queen Anne's	186.1	679.1
St. Mary's	188.5	1340.9
Somerset	283.0	1281.4
Talbot	294.7	995.1
Washington	316.0	1174.1
Wicomico	477.9	1643.6
Worcester	448.4	2494.7

Table 13: Correlations Between the Three YRBS County Measures in Table 12, and County Percentages for Children in Families Living with Married Couples, from 2021 ACS 5 Year Estimates.

Felt Sad or Hopeless	Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide	<u>Made A</u> <u>Suicide Plan</u>
422; Sig04	495; Sig01	684; Sig. <.001)

# VI. SEX, ALCOHOL, AND DRUG ABUSE AMONG YOUTH

In this section, we look at sexual behavior among youth that most folk would regard as problematic. We also examine youthful abuse of alcohol and their use of illicit drugs. Throughout, data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is presented—national versus state trends, then county breakdowns. The latter are used, once again, to look at whether and to what degree these behaviors are associated with the percentage of children under 18 who are living in married couple families.

#### Sexual Behaviors

The following sexual behaviors were examined: percentages who had sexual intercourse prior to age 13, and then 10th and 12th graders who had done so. Also, among 12th graders, we looked at the percentages who had sexual intercourse with four or more partners in their lifetime.

First, we start with national versus Maryland trends, shown in Figures 17a-17d. Maryland data only goes back to the 2012-13 school year, so the trends start there.

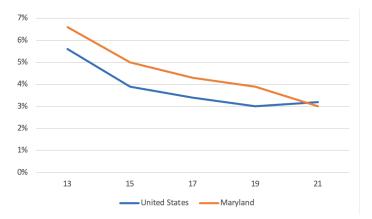


Figure 17a: Percentages Who Had Sexual Intercourse Prior to Age 13, 2013-21, Among All High School Students, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

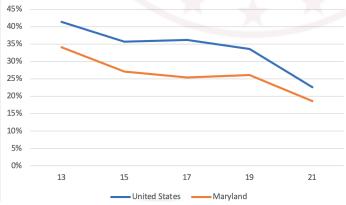


Figure 17b: Percentages of 10th Graders Who Had Ever Engaged in Sexual Intercourse, 2013-21, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

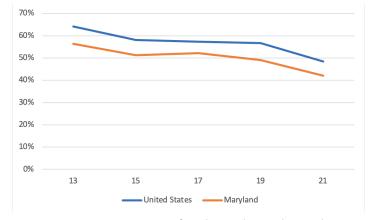


Figure 17c: Percentages of 12th Graders Who Had Ever Engaged in Sexual Intercourse, 2013-21, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

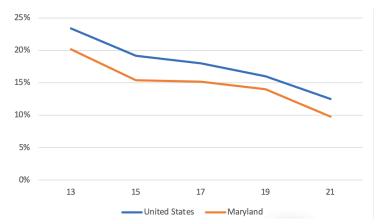


Figure 17d: Percentages of 12th Graders Who Had Engaged in Sexual Intercourse with 4 or More Partners in Their Lifetimes, 2013-21, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

Overall, it is heartening to see all these figures in steady decline nationally and in Maryland. Furthermore, Maryland's figures are consistently lower than for the U.S. as a whole. The only exception to the latter is the percentage who had sex by age 13 in 2021-22.

However, as Table 14 shows, percentages vary enormously by county. Some Maryland county percentages are much higher than the state or national averages. For example, in Garrett, one-quarter of 12th graders claimed to have had sexual intercourse with 4 or more partners, as did over one-fifth in Allegany. Close to one in ten in Baltimore City said they had intercourse prior to age 13. So while statewide things are looking pretty good, some counties have alarmingly high levels of problematic sexual activity among youth.

COUNTIES	Sexual Intercourse by Age 13	Ever Had Sexual Intercourse: 10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Every Had Sexual Intercourse: 12th Grade	Have Had Sexual Intercourse with 4 or + Partners: 12 Graders
Allegany	5.2%	31.3%	62.2%	21.4%
Anne Arundel	4.1%	31.1%	51.4%	14.2%
Baltimore (County)	4.0%	29.6%	46.1%	15.2%
Baltimore (City)	9.7%	40.4%	59.7%	16.2%
Calvert	3.4%	27.7%	55.4%	16.3%
Caroline	4.0%	39.9%	64.3%	23.4%
Carroll	2.6%	18.9%	53.3%	14.0%
Cecil	3.6%	29.6%	56.2%	13.8%
Charles	4.5%	29.0%	54.3%	14.4%
Dorchester	4.7%	26.1%	58.8%	16.1%
Frederick	2.8%	20.6%	48.6%	12.2%
Garrett	5.5%	39.5%	69.9%	25.1%
Harford	3.2%	29.0%	53.2%	14.4%
Howard	2.1%	16.8%	35.7%	7.9%
Kent	4.3%	32.6%	62.8%	19.7%
Montgomery	1.7%	14.3%	40.7%	11.6%
Prince George's	5.9%	33.6%	52.9%	16.1%
Queen Anne's	2.7%	28.6%	50.7%	13.7%
St. Mary's	3.3%	30.0%	51.7%	13.4%
Somerset	9.5%	42.0%	64.3%	23.9%
Talbot	3.7%	29.4%	53.4%	11.8%
Washington	3.5%	26.1%	54.1%	14.7%
Wicomico	6.1%	30.6%	58.5%	22.2%
Worcester	4.4%	32.0%	61.0%	18.1%

Table 14: Percentages at Different Timing and Levels of Sexual Intercourse, YRBS, 2018-

Table 15 shows the correlations between these four YRBS measures of sexual activity, and the percentage of children in families living with married couples, among counties. These correlations suggest that in counties where more children in families live with married parents, lower percentages commence sexual intercourse, especially at early ages, and fewer have sex with large numbers of partners [48]. These are suggestive, not conclusive. But certainly—given their magnitude—these associations deserve serious attention.

Sexual Intercourse by Age 13	Ever Had Sexual Intercourse: 10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Every Had Sexual Intercourse: 12th Grade	Have Had Sexual Intercourse with 4 or More Partners in Lifetime: 12 Graders
709; Sig. <.001	526; Sig008	539; Sig007	491, Sig015

Table 15: Correlations Between the Four YRBS County Measures in Table 11, and County Percentages for Children in Families Headed by Married Couples, from 2021 ACS 5 Year Estimates.

#### Drugs and Alcohol

The YRBS surveys provide a clear picture of alcohol and drug abuse among high school students. Several items were examined here. First, we looked at whether the student had binge drank (four or more drinks in a row for females, five or more in a row for males, within a couple of hours) in the 30 days prior to completing the survey. This was only available from 2016-17 through 2021-22. Then, we looked at whether the student had ever used marijuana (2010-11 through 2021-22) or illegally used prescription pain medication (such as OxyContin, Percocet, etc.) (2016-17 through 2021-22).

Next, the percentages who had ever used cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, or ecstasy were averaged to create one "hard drug" measure. This restricted the latter measure to 2014–15, then 2018–19 and 2020–21. Next was the item asking if students had been "offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property" in the last 12 months. Finally, we examined the percentages who said they had ever injected illegal drugs into their bodies using a needle. U. S. versus Maryland trends for these are presented in Figures 18a–18f.

Sometimes Maryland percentages were better than the national average (for example, binge drinking and marijuana). Sometimes they were worse (for example, getting drugs on school property, the averages of the percentages who had ever used cocaine, heroin, meth, or ecstasy, or the percentages who injected illegal drugs). What is heartening is that, but for illegally using pain medications, the trends of drug use for Maryland high school students in these figures have generally been downward.

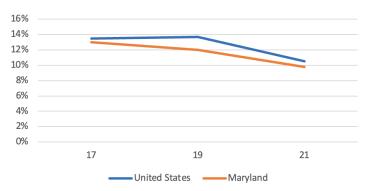


Figure 18a: Percentages of High School Students Who Had Binge Drank Within the Past 30 Days, 2016-17 to 2021-22, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

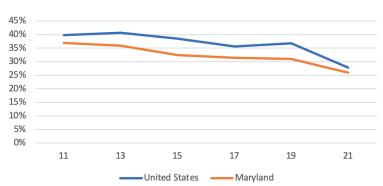


Figure 18b: Percentages of High School Students Who Had Ever Smoked Marijuana, 2010-11 to 2021-22, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

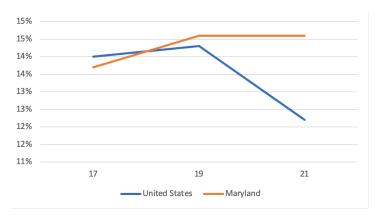


Figure 18c: Percentages of High School Students Who Had Ever Illegally Used Prescription Pain Medications, 2016-17 to 2021-22, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

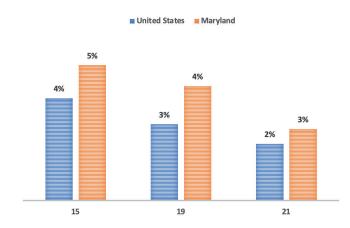


Figure 18d: Average of the Percentages of High School Students Using 4 Hard Drugs (Cocaine, Heroin, Methamphetamines, and Ecstasy), 2014–15, then 2018–19 to 2021–22, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

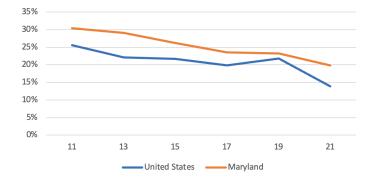


Figure 18e: Percentages of High School Students Who Had Been Offered, Given, or Sold Illegal Drugs on School Property in the Past 12 Months, 2010-11 to 2021-22, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

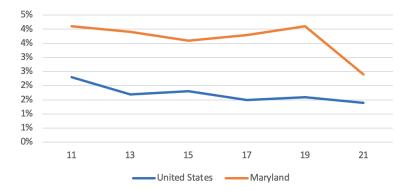


Figure 18f: Percentages of High School Students Who Had Ever Injected Illegal Drugs into Their Bodies Using a Needle, 2010-11 to 2021-22, United States versus Maryland, YRBS

Tables 16a and 16b show these outcomes by county for 2018–19. Once again, the level of variation means that the alcohol and drug abuse situation among high school students in different counties is dramatically different. For example, binge drinking in the last 30 days is highest by far in Queen Anne's. It is Worcester where the greatest percentage of high schoolers have tried pot. Kent wins "first prize" in the percentages acquiring illegal drugs on school property. And the highly dangerous practice of injecting illegal drugs is highest, by a long shot, in Baltimore City and Dorchester.

COUNTIES	Binge Drank in Last 30 Days	Ever Used Marijuana	Ever Used Pain Medications Illegally
Allegany	18.6%	22.7%	13.4%
Anne Arundel	14.6%	17.5%	14.2%
Baltimore (County)	11.0%	16.9%	15.1%
Baltimore (City)	9.3%	20.9%	21.0%
Calvert	15.8%	19.1%	13.5%
Caroline	18.7%	20.0%	12.8%
Carroll	17.3%	17.3%	11.3%
Cecil	19.1%	23.3%	13.4%
Charles	9.8%	18.0%	16.5%
Dorchester	12.8%	15.0%	14.7%
Frederick	17.6%	19.6%	13.1%
Garrett	20.2%	17.3%	16.5%
Harford	16.7%	18.3%	12.4%
Howard	11.3%	13.3%	12.0%
Kent	18.7%	23.7%	14.4%
Montgomery	9.3%	15.9%	11.4%
Prince George's	6.1%	16.9%	19.0%
Queen Anne's	27.8%	21.7%	15.2%
St. Mary's	17.2%	17.3%	14.8%
Somerset	16.5%	26.2%	12.6%
Talbot	18.3%	29.7%	8.9%
Washington	13.2%	32.9%	12.6%
Wicomico	12.2%	33.5%	16.0%
Worcester	19.2%	39.4%	14.6%

Table 16a: Percentages of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Maryland Counties, High School Students, YRBS, 2018-19, Part 1

Table 16b: Percentages of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Maryland Counties, High School Students, YRBS, 2018-19, Part 2

	N. Control of the con		
COUNTIES	Average of Percentages Using 4 Hard Drugs	Offered, Sold, or Given Illegal Drugs on School Property	Ever Used Needle to Inject Illegal Drugs
Allegany	4.8%	16.3%	3.7%
Anne Arundel	5.1%	23.1%	5.1%
Baltimore (County)	3.8%	26.3%	4.0%
Baltimore (City)	9.0%	23.5%	9.2%
Calvert	3.5%	21.0%	2.8%
Caroline	4.1%	21.3%	4.5%
Carroll	3.1%	19.5%	2.9%
Cecil	3.5%	19.5%	2.8%
Charles	6.5%	22.2%	5.2%
Dorchester	11.9%	26.4%	9.0%
Frederick	3.2%	21.8%	2.8%
Garrett	6.2%	17.7%	4.3%
Harford	3.2%	18.0%	2.5%
Howard	2.5%	22.4%	2.1%
Kent	5.8%	29.9%	5.4%
Montgomery	2.6%	24.2%	2.8%
Prince George's	5.2%	25.3%	4.9%
Queen Anne's	4.9%	22.9%	3.7%
St. Mary's	3.7%	21.8%	3.0%
Somerset	6.1%	26.1%	3.5%
Talbot	4.6%	21.2%	4.4%
Washington	3.8%	19.6%	3.4%
Wicomico	5.8%	20.6%	5.1%
Worcester	4.8%	24.8%	3.6%

Correlations between these six YRBS measures and the percentage of children in families that are living with married couples, for Maryland counties, are shown in Table 17. Only three were significantly and negatively correlated: ever used pain medications illegally, obtained illegal drugs on school property, and had used needles to inject illegal drugs. Moreover, when controlling for percent African American using linear regression, as indicated [49], only two of these correlations ended up still being significantly and negatively correlated with the percentage of children in families living with married parents—the hard drug average, and the percentages who had obtained illegal drugs on school property.

Binge Drank in Last 30 Days	Ever Used Marijuana	Ever Used Pain Meds Illegally	Average of Percentages Using 4 Hard Drugs	Offered, Sold, or Given Illegal Drugs on School Property Past 12 Months	Ever Used Needle to Inject Illegal Drugs
.118, not significant	-210, not significant	572; Sig003.  Not significant after controlling for percent Black.	821; Sig. <.001	847; Sig. <.001	332, not significant

Table 17: Correlations Between the Six YRBS County Measures in Tables 16a and 16b, and County Percentages for Children in Families Headed by Married Couples, from 2021 ACS 5 Year Estimates.

We can certainly say that families are impacted by this drug usage, and far more so in counties where it is highest. However, here, the percentage of children living in married couple families is not correlated with most of these measures of drug and alcohol abuse. That correlation is extremely strong, however, in the important areas of using the hardest drugs, and trading drugs at school. As always, this is worthy of further investigation.

#### Conclusion

The degree to which youth are commencing sexual relationships especially very early, using hard drugs, and obtaining drugs on school property are all significantly and negatively associated with the percentages of children in families living with married couples, among counties. This is consistent with what we would expect given abundant rigorous and controlled social science research studies of these inter-relationships over many years. Those who care about the welfare of Maryland youth cannot blithely ignore the critical role that being in married couple families play in their lives. Obviously, there are troubled children in married couple families, and many healthy ones being raised by single parents. But these types of findings, so common in the social science literature, should not be ignored.

In the next section we will examine the academic success of children in Maryland schools overall and by county. Gaining a solid education—at least finishing high school and hopefully doing so with reasonable proficiency and readiness for college for those who intend to pursue it—is, after all, a critical part of that success sequence on which we initially focused this report.

### VII. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

The state of Maryland maintains an educational "report card" for the state, its counties, schools and so on. These include graduation and attendance rates, as well as the state's own proficiency exams for elementary, middle, and high school students [50]. Note that these are the benchmarks that Maryland has chosen and created, and by which they evaluate their schools and districts. Here, we examine the most recent figures, for Maryland's counties, posted for the 2021–22 school year. Then, we consider whether the county averages are associated with the percentages of children in families who are living with married couples [51]. The basic results are shown in Tables 18a and 18b, then Table 19.

COUNTIES	Elementary Math	Elementary ELA	Middle School Math	Middle School ELA
Allegany	34.0%	48.6%	18.2%	40.8%
Anne Arundel	30.7%	50.2%	19.2%	48.2%
Baltimore (County)	28.2%	42.7%	10.4%	34.7%
Baltimore (City)	9.9%	19.0%	6.7%	23.0%
Calvert	42.1%	51.1%	24.5%	54.1%
Caroline	24.6%	44.1%	13.9%	36.9%
Carroll	52.6%	63.3%	26.7%	56.7%
Cecil	26.0%	39.4%	15.9%	39.4%
Charles	20.5%	37.5%	13.5%	38.4%
Dorchester	16.4%	29.2%	9.4%	27.8%
Frederick	40.9%	54.7%	24.9%	51.9%
Garrett	29.6%	39.8%	24.8%	48.6%
Harford	35.8%	52.4%	18.4%	46.3%
Howard	47.1%	55.9%	36.2%	59.4%
Kent	20.5%	35.4%	8.2%	34.9%
Montgomery	42.7%	54.8%	23.1%	51.8%
Prince George's	12.4%	33.1%	8.5%	36.1%
Queen Anne's	44.9%	57.2%	23.8%	59.1%
St. Mary's	36.4%	48.9%	29.8%	52.4%
Somerset	15.2%	32.4%	6.9%	28.2%
Talbot	23.0%	43.0%	13.0%	39.9%
Washington	34.6%	48.2%	23.7%	48.6%
Wicomico	26.6%	34.7%	12.3%	33.0%
Worcester	46.3%	60.7%	33.7%	66.1%

Table 18a: Percentages Reaching Math and English Language Arts Proficiency (ELA), by County, Elementary and Middle School, Maryland School Report Card, 2021-22

Table 18b: Percentages Reaching Math and English Language Arts Proficiency (ELA), High School. Also, Attendance Rates and 4 Year Graduation Rates. By County, Maryland School Report Card, 2021-22

COUNTIES	High School Math	High School ELA	Attendance Rates	4-Year Graduation Rates
Allegany	21.6%	49.2%	87.7%	90.0%
Anne Arundel	37.3%	58.7%	92.4%	90.3%
Baltimore (County)	28.5%	55.8%	91.0%	86.2%
Baltimore (City)	13.3%	42.0%	81.8%	69.2%
Calvert	44.2%	66.3%	91.5%	94.7%
Caroline	21.7%	46.7%	88.3%	89.8%
Carroll	57.1%	49.5%	92.0%	95.0%
Cecil	29.6%	52.9%	89.6%	91.9%
Charles	31.4%	47.0%	91.3%	93.6%
Dorchester	13.2%	42.8%	84.0%	80.1%
Frederick	43.9%	64.1%	92.2%	93.7%
Garrett	24.7%	37.4%	93.0%	91.6%
Harford	31.5%	64.1%	91.9%	89.2%
Howard	55.3%	70.4%	93.5%	94.1%
Kent	21.4%	48.4%	90.4%	95.2%
Montgomery	48.1%	70.8%	93.8%	91.4%
Prince George's	16.3%	48.0%	91.7%	77.6%
Queen Anne's	39.9%	47.6%	91.3%	96.3%
St. Mary's	39.0%	61.4%	91.8%	91.0%
Somerset	13.5%	35.1%	86.6%	75.0%
Talbot	22.3%	56.2%	91.5%	96.3%
Washington	25.0%	58.6%	90.7%	90.9%
Wicomico	24.9%	40.0%	89.0%	83.1%
Worcester	46.3%	48.7%	90.2%	91.7%

It is pretty obvious that Baltimore City scores, across the board, are nothing short of disastrous. But some of the other counties appear to be seriously struggling as well. Consider, for example, Caroline, Dorchester, and Somerset to name just a few. Others appear, at least according to these assessments, to be doing much better, for example Carroll. Math proficiency levels, generally, are downright alarming.

How are these associated with the percentages of children in families who are living with married couples? These correlations are presented in Tables 19a and 19b [52].

Table 19a: Correlations Between Proficiency Percentages, and the Percentages of Children in Families Living with Married Couples, Among Maryland Counties

Elementary	Elementary	Middle School	Middle School	High School	High School
Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA
.755; Sig.	.821; Sig.	.670; Sig.	.778; Sig.	.831; Sig.	.634; Sig.
<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

Table 19b: Correlations Between Proficiency Percentages, and the Percentages of Children in Families Living with Married Couples, Among Maryland Counties

Attendance Rates	4-Year Graduation Rates
.846; Sig. <.001	.738; Sig. <.001

While, once again, these correlations could be investigated further, they certainly suggest that even at county levels, in Maryland, for children marriage may matter—quite a bit—for key areas of student academic performance. This is certainly consistent with a great deal of social science research (see the next section).

And it is not hard to imagine the many ways that having more children in families headed by married parents may make profound positive differences in education. There are more resources (including money), but also time to invest in keeping kids in school and on task, getting homework done, and so on. Where the marriages and homes are stable, kids are not as likely to be dealing with upheaval in the most important area of their personal lives. It is a lot easier for married parents to free up at least one for activities such as parent-teacher conferences, PTA, attending school board meetings, volunteering, and so on. In most things, including parenting school kids, two can get more accomplished than one, with less drain. When we get right down to it, this is common sense.

#### Conclusion

There are of course many other areas relevant to family life and family structure in Maryland that could be explored. But so far, we have certainly hit many of those that Maryland families, parents, and citizens in general, care deeply about—poverty, crime, violence, drugs, alcohol abuse, underage sex, school performance, and so on.

Every association shown here between family structure and outcomes for Maryland counties is of course suggestive, but clearly worthy of further study. It is always difficult to explore these types of relationships at aggregate levels, especially with the limited number of cases (counties) we have here. For many of the variables examined here, particularly child outcomes, in looking at the role of family structure, the most powerful approach involves looking at data at the level of individuals. For example, looking at how kids in married households are doing in school compared to those in other types of home situations. For much of our data this is not possible—for example, YRBS does not include family structure variables, nor does the Maryland School Report Card.

A lot of national research has used individual level data connecting these outcomes with family structure, and a few important and recent ones will be cited in the next section. This research leads us to expect to find many of the correlations and realities we have found here. But that research is not Maryland specific, and we are trying to get a snapshot of Maryland here. And of course there are always other potential variables that might need to be controlled. Never-theless, looking at reality in Maryland across counties in a quick overview like this is certainly valuable, identifying as it does some key aggregate impacts and realities for these districts that can be further explored and discussed.

Now, we are ready to move on to the final section, where we will consider some realistic approaches to policy that Maryland leaders ought to consider applying and leveraging, given what we know about the importance of healthy marriage and family life to flourishing individuals and communities.

### VIII. SOME THOUGHTS ON PUBLIC POLICY

In this final section we will look at some general ways that Maryland's leaders can do a better job of combating social ills and promoting safety, happiness, and prosperity through encouraging the formation of families rooted ideally in committed marriage. This is good for everyone, including singles, the widowed, single mothers, and fathers.

# A. Stop ignoring marriage—the elephant in the room—when addressing social inequity.

Addressing alleged inequities, including if not especially racial ones, is a prominent and reasonable concern for Maryland's political and educational elites. Too often this is done by identifying undesirable differences in outcomes—such as in poverty, crime, physical and mental health, drug abuse, and education—and trying to correct them directly. Approaches such as income redistribution directly and indirectly, extra support and help for disadvantaged minorities, dealing with discriminatory actions and so on are almost exclusively relied on. These may have merit, but typically bring little significant long-term benefits to the targeted populations and may unintentionally shift harm to others (as when affirmative action policies in education benefit some groups but make it more difficult for others).

An unintentional side effect of directly focusing on these inequities is stigmatizing some minority groups by highlighting outcome deficiencies. For example we know that crime and poverty are higher, and educational outcomes generally poorer, among African Americans in Maryland. The data on this cannot be ignored. In reverse, we can identify similar results highlighting the relative success of, for example, Marylanders of Asian background in areas like mathematics and science proficiency.

Educational and political elites appear committed to talking and strategizing about these inequities absent noticing the elephant in the room—marriage. Yet when marriage is taken into consideration, the data strongly supports that in many important outcomes, the most significant disadvantages are in whether adults and children are enjoying the advantages of marriage. Perhaps policy makers could start by thoughtfully reading and discussing the new book by University of Maryland economist, and nonresident Brookings Institute senior fellow, Melissa S. Kearney: The Two-Parent Privilege: How Americans Stopped Getting Married and Started Falling Farther Behind [53].

An important and telling research summary by W. Bradford Wilcox, Wendy Wang, Spencer James, and Murray that was published recently powerfully supports the "two-parent privilege" idea. Using research based on individual level data, controlling for numerous socio-economic factors, these social scientists convincingly argue that the advantage for children raised in married families has been getting stronger over time, not diminishing. For example, being raised in married families actually helped Millennial children more than Boomer ones. Meanwhile, divorce may actually be having a harder impact on kids now than in the past, at least partly because more of them involve low-conflict marriages, where the negative impact is measurably greater compared to the effect of having high-conflict parents break up. Another intriguing point they make is that fathers tend to be more involved in child-rearing now than was often true for Boomers, so being deprived of Dads has even more of an impact today then it did fifty years ago. Outcomes they looked at included emotional health, educational attainment, financial prosperity, and impacts on behavior in school [54].

Oftentimes, in studying things like the two-parent advantage, social scientists and policy makers try to explain this away by "controlling" (holding constant) factors such as the incomes, poverty status, educational levels, and so on of caregivers. If not handled properly (and it often is not) this becomes a kind of statistical "sleight of hand." Why? Because marital status strongly impacts these very same socio-economic outcomes. This can be done with other outcomes of family structure as well, such as the amount of time parents have to spend with, and supervise, their children. Some policy makers and social scientists seem to be saying, "it is not the marital status of parents that matter, but their income, class, how much time they have with their kids" and so on, as if these advantages are not related to their marital statuses.



As prominent sociologist Barbara Dafoe Whitehead pointed out, "...it is possible, by disaggregating the data . . . to make family structure 'go away' as an independent variable. . . . It is true . . . just as disaggregating Hurricane Andrew into wind, rain, and tides can make it disappear as a meteorological phenomenon" [55]. You see, if you can separate hurricanes from the wind, rain, and tides that accompany them, then we can say that hurricanes are not harmful [56]. We can add to this the fact that "controlling" for these factors often does not make the association between family structure and these outcomes disappear anyway.

What this does is push policy elites to do everything but promote marriage. They treat the symptoms rather than the true underlying problem, to try to get rid of the symptoms of the symptoms. The most common intervention ends up being various forms of income transfers, essentially taking more from prosperous families to elevate the situation of single parent families. We have been doing this for decades with little to show for it, and a lot of those tax wells are running dry.

This has obvious implications for how we understand and try to fix some racial inequities. In this present report, the focus was not race or ethnicity, but family life rooted in marriage vis a vis a range of critical social outcomes. Yet the relationship at the county level between the percentages who were African American, percentages in married couple families and households, or who were married, were consistent, negative, powerful, and significant. In most cases, when looking at associations between the percentage black and various outcomes at the county level, the latter diminished to insignificance when marital status was controlled. This is not the place to catalogue each, but just to name a few significant correlation The percentages black and the percentages of children in poverty (.425; Sig. .038) became insignificant to the point of near non-existence, and even slightly negative, when the percentage of children in families living with married couples was controlled (Beta = -.017; Sig. .911). The correlation between percentages black and the violent crime rate (.601; Sig. .002) became insignificant when the percentage living in married households was controlled (Beta = .127; Sig. .465). The correlation between percentages black and percentages that are at proficiency levels in high school math (-.458; Sig. .024) became insignificant, again almost non-existent, when the percentage of children in families living with married couples was controlled (Beta = -.017; Sig. 908).

Yes, racial discrimination and structure inequities must be identified and corrected wherever they exist. But can we talk about the disadvantages facing African American adults and children in Maryland without being honest about how they are disproportionately denied the two-parent advantage? How much of our policy focus to improve the lives of African Americans in Maryland should be on promoting marriage and discouraging, for example, high out-of-wedlock pregnancy relative to all of the other things, many quite laudatory and necessary, that we do?

Is marriage a "panacea" for all or most social ills? No, it is not. But is it extremely important, and generally strongly positive in its effects? Yes, and it is long past time we give it the attention it deserves in understanding and addressing social ills and deficits, and not just by pundits and politicians in conservative circles but across the political and ideological spectrum.

# B. Start capturing data on children's family structures in assessments like the YRBS and the Maryland School Report Cards.

It is incomprehensible, given all the data that is already being collected on children's welfare, their academic performance, and school outcomes, that these sources do not include even the most basic information about family structure. Whatever our theory or ideologies, since when is whether kids are living with two mothers or fathers, single parents, grandparents or foster homes, cohabiting couples and so on—and determining if and how much these are connected to various outcomes—not worth being able to directly, easily investigate within our states, counties, and schools? We can directly compare academic performance and other outcomes breakdowns for individual children and groups of them by highly specific racial and ethnic categories, but not family structure? Why? Because we ask about and document the one, but not the other.

This is not hard information to capture. The data will not be perfect, but it will be a lot better than what we are being given now. In doing this report, it would have helped enormously and made for much more powerful and clear analyses. But certainly, if we want to account properly for family structure in policy decisions having to do with children and want to rely on data such as school performance or YRBS to do so, we ought to have this information about family structure. Validated, reliable, thoroughly vetted ways of measuring family structure of children abound. The Census certainly measures this. There is simply no excuse to continue to deny this vital data to Maryland policy makers and researchers. Certainly, if the latter were to recommendations under "A" (above) and "C" (below), one or two simple, accurate variables about family structure would help enormously.

C. In all policy and legislation that could impact marriage and family—and certainly everything that directly deals with it—identify and either reject or modify, anything that undermines marriage practically and even symbolically.

No doubt this is a tall order. The best place to start is with legislation and policy that is under consideration now, or that has been implemented so recently as to be easier to modify or repeal. Why cannot executives, legislative committees, and so on require a detailed report about the likely impacts upon marriage for everything being proposed or reviewed that could affect it, prior to final votes or adoption? Our sister organization, the Massachusetts Family Institute recommends that "proposed legislation that may have a significant impact on families should be accompanied by a 'Family Impact Statement' which will explain the direct and indirect effects of the proposed policy on families..."[57] That is what we have in view here.

It would take many volumes to discuss each possible example of how and where this recommendation could be, or should have been, applied. Here the important thing is the principle, and this will emerge clearly in concrete cases, if the policy or legislative focus is there.

Consider for example Maryland's law mandating that health insurance cover fertility treatments (exempting small businesses and religious entities with clear faith-based objections). Starting at the beginning of 2021, this mandate was expanded to cover "single mothers by choice," effectively ending any marriage requirement.

At the same time, the waiting period was reduced from two years to one year of unprotected intercourse, and the required number of less expensive attempts at intrauterine insemination (IUI) before moving to in vitro fertilization (IVF) was cut in half, from six to three [58].

Everyone understands how expensive this treatment is. For example, according to Forbes, just one cycle of IVF can cost between \$15,000 and \$30,000 [59]. A cycle of IUI typically costs between \$500 and \$4,000 [60]. Of course, with both IUI and IVF multiple cycles are often needed, especially as women become older. Ultimately, the costs of this coverage must be passed on to various parties—other employees, consumers, and so on. Nothing is free.

Here however these significant costs, associated with a potentially large expansion of women benefiting from and using this mandated coverage (especially as marriage rates fall and median ages at first marriage rise) [61], directly encourage and require Maryland companies and insurers to pay for women to have babies out-of-wedlock. This is a statement, loud and clear, that the latter is fine, and that marriage does not matter in forming the families within which these children will be raised. Unlike many adoptions by singles, for example, there are no currently existing children benefiting from this mandate. This is a powerful assertion, by the state, that giving the twoparent advantage to as many of Maryland's children as possible is not important. It is a decisive political rejection of a critical element of the success sequence, namely that ideally, people should marry before having children.

Another way that Maryland fails to promote and respect marriage is the marriage penalty built into the state income tax. The Tax Foundation lists Maryland as one of only sixteen states with such penalties, as of July 1, 2022 [62].

These are just two examples of ways that Maryland could do better in avoiding policies that symbolically or practically undermine marriage. They are easily remedied. Most states do not penalize marriage in the tax code. Only fifteen states mandate that health insurance cover fertility treatments at all, not to mention that they cover this for single women [63].

# D. Build honest teaching about the benefits of marriage into required curriculum for Maryland public high schools.

Often, teaching youth about the advantages of marriage is only discussed in the context of discussing the benefits of abstinence [64]. This is not enough. It is inexcusable that so many students graduate high school without any knowledge of many of the most important facts regarding the practical benefits of marriage. The data is clear on these matters and not at all ambiguous or beyond the reach of reasonably literate high school students. They can absorb this before they start making critical life decisions about having babies and forming families.

It would be great to go beyond that to providing instruction to youth about what they can do now to set themselves up for marital success in the future. Here again, there is a lot of reliable data on what kinds of choices work for or against this laudable life outcome. The key of course is not just getting married but marrying well.

But just addressing the concrete benefits of matrimony would be a great start. Then at least Marylanders will have been informed just how much and in what ways marriage matters individually, in families, communities, and so on.

An ideal place to put this is in the required high school social studies curriculum. It does not appear to be addressed in the latter at this time [65].

# E. Consider changes and alternatives to Maryland's no-fault divorce system.

Until very recently, Maryland law allowed for no fault divorce on two grounds. The first was simply mutual consent, which could occur even if the couple still resides together. No waiting period was required, though a lot of details needed to be hammered out with regards to disposition of property, child custody and support, and so on. The other was physically living apart, without sexual intimacy, for a continuous period of at least 12 months. In the latter, both parties did not need to agree to the separation or divorce [66]. No wrongdoing needed to be established at all, though some divorces would involve accusations and findings of fault such as adultery, cruelty, being imprisoned for crime, and desertion, and many would require significant intervention of the courts [67].

Sadly, the law which went into effect on October 1, 2023 made divorce even more easy to obtain. Couples now no longer have to wait as long (only 6 months instead of 12), claim the other is at fault, or even live in a separate location. Now, based simply on one of three permissible grounds (mutual consent, six-month separation, or irreconcilable differences), couples can obtain a divorce. Maryland now joins 18 other states in no longer permitting fault-based divorce [68].

No-fault divorce treats the marital contract as weak relative to the requirement of many other contracts dealing with obviously lesser aspects of life [69]. Maggie Gallagher has noted that it makes marriage more like "cohabitation with benefits" [70].

There is a great deal of debate as to whether no-fault divorce made divorce more common. It almost certainly has not made it less harmful, for example, to children [71]. All these important considerations aside, it certainly appears to have cheapened marriage, lowering it legally and culturally as a solemn and sacred commitment relative to other forms of human bonds and obligations. There is little dissent among family scholars that no fault divorce has dramatically changed the landscape of marriage and divorce. It was designed to, of course, but many of the consequences were not intended [72].

What would be sensible places to start pushing back no-fault divorce, both to alleviate practical harm and to do a better job honoring marriage in public policy and life?

One would be lengthening the period of required separation if either party wishes to contest the divorce – reversing the recent legal change. This would potentially reduce the high proportions of divorce in which the marriage was essentially ended unilaterally, balancing the power of the spouse who wants to stay more vis a vis the one who wants to leave [73]. This also communicates the seriousness of marriage. And it leaves time for marital intervention and counseling that may save the marriage.

Another, perhaps more vital way to push back on no fault divorce, given the growing understanding of the short and long-term impacts of divorce on children, is to require findings of fault in marriage where there are children under the age of 16 in the family, and then be sure that those wrongdoings that can justify divorce are truly serious ones. This also has the virtue of communicating the importance of marriage to children. Polls suggest that enacting such restrictions on divorce may be more politically palatable than ending no fault divorce completely [74].

These are just a couple of suggestions. Whether through this or other means, however, it is time to begin pushing back no-fault divorce, marking the specialness in the status, social role and reality of marriage as distinct and uniquely valuable among all other human institutions.

#### F. Protect life by restricting the practice of abortion

A key talking point of abortion advocates is that expanding abortion access will result in a decrease in out-of-wedlock children. Maryland has one of the least restrictive abortion regimes in the country. Yet we've shown that unrestricted abortion has not reduced non-marital childbearing. Indeed, the opposite is true.

In every major religious tradition in the world, and even in nonreligious traditions, children are a blessing and represent the future. Maryland's culture and laws ought to incentivize the having of children in the best environment for them and for our communities - within a married, two parent family.

# G. Promote the welfare of all children and parents by easing their tax burdens.

We must do everything in our power to strengthen all families—single and married alike—through easing onerous tax burdens [75]. This will liberate more of their family income to directly support and advance themselves and their communities, based on needs they identify "on the ground," so to speak, rather than government bureaucrats deciding what they "need." Sifting aid through the state is costly, where often leaving those dollars in families' pockets in the first place gives them more and lets them use them more effectively. Involved parents provide an unbelievably important social good at great personal cost of time and money, not to mention emotional investments. They should be allowed to keep more of their hard-earned money so they can do this even more, and more effectively.

# H. Promote the mental health of adolescents by limiting technology

Our report has shown that Maryland youth, mirroring their national counterparts, have increasing rates of sadness, hopelesness and suicidal ideations. In addition to increasing numbers of teens being raised in nonmarital homes, another risk factor for this is the number of teens who utilize social media [76]. Lawmakers ought to pursue laws that limit exposure to the media (such as age verification for porn websites), and strengthen parental oversight of the use of their teens' technology.

#### I. Support parental rights.

Supporting families also means supporting parental rights, including their rights to know about, direct, and otherwise be involved in their children's educations, and well as their physical and mental healthcare [77]. The ongoing controversy in Montgomery County where parents had to sue the school district just to know what their kids were being taught, and encouraged to do, with their gender identities, is shameful. Regardless of the findings by the 4th Circuit defending the county schools against these parents, this should have never happened anywhere in the state of Maryland. Period.

How can we claim to want to help parents, including single parents, and even demand they take responsibility for their children, while embracing policies such as this that literally alienate parents from their own children, while making these kids even more dependent on paid school faculty and staff. Why are we pitting school faculty and staff against parents with kids in the middle?

A significant way the state can support parental rights is to empower parents to choose the schools that best suit their children's unique needs. Educational choice – whether in the form of a grant, scholarship or an education savings account – can give parents the power to educate their children in the way that they see fit. Following the lead of states across the country [78], lawmakers ought to expand funding and eligibility for the BOOST program so that more children can benefit.

J. Pursue policies to support single parent families rooted in honest understanding of the challenges they actually face relative to married couple families.

Although this is certainly unintended, one side effect of denying the importance of marriage to the welfare of adults, especially those who are raising children, and to the latter themselves, is that it is harder to be honest about what single parent homes need. Beyond policies like transferring income to support single parents more, there appears to be less and less honest reflection, for example, of what gaps kids have when they are denied a father (and sometimes, mother) involved daily in their lives, compared to the advantages enjoyed by children who do have two involved parents.

One of the key findings of Wilcox et al's recent piece referenced above is the growing consensus among those of more progressive ideology, and among college students and graduates generally, that having a married mother and father is not at all relevant to the welfare of kids. For example, they document that, as of 2022, only about one-in-three political liberals think that "children are better off if they have two married parents," despite reams of research supporting that statement [79]. Of course, this is both a product of, and impacts, elite consensus and with it, the policies for families and children that they do or do not embrace. We have documented this shift in perspectives about what children need to thrive in sources like the General Social Survey for years.

When we are honest about the real differences and disadvantages facing children and their parents in single parent families, we are in a better position to help them. We can help fill in the gaps that are really there, gaps that cannot be fully fixed by more government dollars, free school lunches and after-school programs and the like. We can also be more motivated to do more at the level of prevention, at trying our best to give more kids that two-parent advantage, at promoting that success sequence and helping them get on or get back on that track, even as we give them more of the help that they need right now.

This includes the real need to look carefully at, and reform, government welfare. As the Massachusetts Family Institute put it, we must "encourage marriage among those receiving assistance" [80].

Finally, this also means doing more to keep divorced and single fathers—and mothers separated from their children too—involved in the lives of their children as much as is feasible [81]. This is difficult with overburdened courts and government agencies, but this includes doing more to ensure child support and custody that keeps Dads and Moms who are not living together connected to and providing for their children as much as possible.

#### Conclusion

Marriage is essential to the well-being of children in Maryland. This report confirms what the data has corroborated on the national level, and what many of us know is true - marriage matters. And in communities and counties across Maryland where marriages are not formed well and in sufficient numbers, kids tend to do worse on a whole host of outcomes.

We hope that this report is of benefit to Maryland citizens, including its families, parents, children, taxpayers, and leaders in all sectors. Agree or disagree, talking about the importance of family life, and of marriage, to many vital aspects of human flourishing is a worthwhile endeavor that hopefully we have helped to encourage here.



### **FOOTNOTES**

- [1] W. Bradford Wilcox and Wendy Wang, The Power of the Success Sequence for Disadvantaged Adults, American Enterprise Institute, May 2022, 2. Available at: <a href="https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/the-power-of-the-success-sequence/">https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/the-power-of-the-success-sequence/</a>.
- [2] Bradford and Wang, The Power of the Success Sequence, 2-3.
- [3] For example, this is obvious in each release of the prestigious General Social Survey. In the survey years from 2010 through 2021 combined, highly significant differences in happiness between married respondents and those of other marital statuses existed in every age group, from 18-29 and 30-39 in ten year increments up to 70-79 and 80 & older. Even among the youngest, 45% of the married described themselves as "very happy" compared to 21% of divorced, 16% of separated, and 21% of never married. This is not just because happier people are more likely to get married, as authors Case & VanderWeele (see citation in footnote #4, below) recently substantiated.
- [4] See for example Andrew Cherlin, Public and Private Families: An Introduction, 8th edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2016), 206; Tyler J. VanderWeele, "What the New York Times Gets Wrong About Marriage, Health, and Well-Being," The Institute for Family Studies, May 30, 2017, <a href="https://ifstudies.org/blog/what-the-new-york-times-gets-wrong-about-marriage-health-and-well-being">https://ifstudies.org/blog/what-the-new-york-times-gets-wrong-about-marriage-health-and-well-being</a>; Brandan Case and Tyler J. VanderWeele, "Marital Bliss: New Evidence That Marriage Promotes Flourishing," The Institute for Family Studies, February 27, 2023, <a href="https://ifstudies.org/blog/marital-bliss-new-evidence-that-marriage-promotes-flourishing-">https://ifstudies.org/blog/marital-bliss-new-evidence-that-marriage-promotes-flourishing-</a>. Focusing particularly on males, and dealing with a host of mental health issues including suicide, depression, loneliness, substance abuse, and more is Rob Whitley, "The Mental Health Struggles of Single and Divorced Men," Psychology Today, February 4, 2021, <a href="https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/talking-about-men/202102/the-mental-health-struggles-single-and-divorced-men">https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/talking-about-men/202102/the-mental-health-struggles-single-and-divorced-men</a>. All of these articles have numerous further research links and citations.
- [5] See for example Augustine J. Kposowa, "Marital Status and Suicide in the National Longitudinal Mortality Study," Journal of Epidemiology & Public Health 54, no. 4, (April 2000): 254-61. See also Whitley, "The Mental Health Struggles of Single and Divorced Men."
- [6] See for example W. Bradford Wilcox and Robin Fretwell Wilson, "One Way to End Violence Against Women? Married Dads," American Enterprise Institute, June 10, 2014, <a href="https://www.aei.org/articles/one-way-to-end-violence-against-women-married-dads/">https://www.aei.org/articles/one-way-to-end-violence-against-women-married-dads/</a>.
- [7] This will be detailed, with citations, later in the report.
- [8] Sources include Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially (New York: Broadway Books, 2000), see their excellent summary statement on page 125. Also Isabel V. Sawhill, "Twenty Years Later It Turns Out Dan Quayle Was Right About Murphy Brown and Unmarried Moms," The Brookings Institute, May 25, 2012, <a href="https://www.brookings.edu/articles/twenty-years-later-it-turns-out-dan-quayle-was-right-about-murphy-brown-and-unmarried-moms/">https://www.brookings.edu/articles/twenty-years-later-it-turns-out-dan-quayle-was-right-about-murphy-brown-and-unmarried-moms/</a>; and Gene J. Starbuck and Karen Saucier Lundy, Families in Context: Sociological Perspectives, 3rd Edition (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2015), 248; and James Q. Wilson, The Marriage Problem: How Our Culture Has Weakened Families (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 7, 17. See also more recent sources cited in footnotes #53 and #54, in the last section of this report.
- [9] "Maryland Regions," Visit Maryland, https://www.visitmaryland.org/article/maryland-regions.
- [10]In Maryland, Baltimore City is independent from Baltimore County. So, as mentioned previously, as the U.S. Census also does, we will treat Baltimore City like a county here and throughout this report.
- [11] In this report, where Census data is used, where possible 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) estimates are used. So, for example, the 2021 5-year estimates combine 2017-21. This provides the most precision and adequate sample sizes, especially when using measurements for smaller entities such as, in Maryland, counties such as Kent, Dorchester or Caroline.
- [12] Cohabiting couples did not appear in this series of 5-year estimates until 2019. Thus, no meaningful time trend for this set of data would be useful.
- [13] Again, see footnote #3 about Baltimore City.
- [14] For example, few younger than 20 are married, divorced, separated, etc.
- [15] "U.S. Marriage and Divorce Rates by State: 2011 & 2021," U.S. Census, based upon American Community Survey 1-year estimate data, May 31, 2023. <a href="https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/marriage-divorce-rates-by-state-2011-2021.html">https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/marriage-divorce-rates-by-state-2011-2021.html</a>
- [16] https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/visualizations/time-series/demo/families-and-households/ms-2.pdf
- [17] Kate Perez, "A Year After Roe v. Wade Was Overturned, This is What State Abortion Laws Look Like in US," USA Today, June 24, 2023, <a href="https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2023/06/24/us-state-abortion-laws-after-dobbs-one-year/70350060007/">https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2023/06/24/us-state-abortion-laws-after-dobbs-one-year/70350060007/</a>.
- [18] Liam Reilly and Kaanita Iyer, "Maryland Governor Signs Bills Protecting Abortion Rights and Gender-Affirming Care," CNN, May 3, 2023, <a href="https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/03/politics/maryland-abortion-gender-affirming-care-bills/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/03/politics/maryland-abortion-gender-affirming-care-bills/index.html</a>.
- [19] Katherine Kortsmit, Antoinette T. Nguyen, Michele G. Mandel, Elizabeth Clark, Lisa M. Hollier, Jessica Rodenhizer, Maura K. Whiteman, "Abortion Surveillance—United States, 2020," Surveillance Summaries 71, no. 10, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, November 25, 2022, <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/ss/ss7110a1.htm#methods">https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/ss/ss7110a1.htm#methods</a>.

- [20] See for example the following: Sawhill. "Twenty Years Later." See also Laurie DeRose, Mark Lyons-Amos, W. Bradford Wilcox, and Gloria Huarcaya. "The Cohabitation Go-Round: Cohabitation and Family Instability across the Globe," World Family Map 2017: Mapping Family Change and Child Well-Being Outcomes (New York: Social Trends Institute, 2017), 3–21.
- [21] "Cohabiting Parents Differ from Married Ones in Three Big Ways," Brookings Institute Report, April 5, 2017, <a href="https://www.brookings.edu/articles/cohabiting-parents-differ-from-married-ones-in-three-big-ways/">https://www.brookings.edu/articles/cohabiting-parents-differ-from-married-ones-in-three-big-ways/</a>.
- [22] The basis here are individual children in families. They are then identified by whether or not they are living with married parents, a single male or single female head of house. The tiny numbers living in non-family households are not included here. See also footnote #23, below.
- [23] Please note that living in households includes those living in families but also includes those living in non-family households, for example those in foster care.
- [24] DeRose et al, "The Cohabitation Go-Round," 11.
- [25] The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2009).
- [26] DeRose et al, "The Cohabitation Go-Round," 13-4.
- [27] The cohabiting couple percentages come from Detailed Table S0901, in which several counties are missing. This is based on children in households, which includes non-family households. The other columns are based on children in families—have no missing counties and come from Detailed Table B09002. The samples for children in families are somewhat smaller than for children in households (since the latter includes non-family households, for example), so the percentages are rooted in slightly different totals. So, the married, male- and female-headed columns add up to one hundred percent, then the cohabiting column is separate information from these.
- [28] Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. A second edition was published in 2012 with additional data, analysis, and argumentation.
- [29] 110-18. The points here about the financial benefits of marriage closely follow those set forth by this report's author, David J. Ayers, in his Christian Marriage: A Comprehensive Introduction (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2018), 51-2.
- [30] Clements, Jonathan, "Getting Married Has Its Financial Benefits," Wall Street Journal, May 25, 2014, <a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304652804579571931962914924">https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304652804579571931962914924</a>.
- [31] See for example his Washington Post op-ed from April 2, 2015, "Don't Be a Bachelor: Why Married Men Work Harder, Smarter, and Make More Money," <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/inspired-life/wp/2015/04/02/dont-be-a-bachelor-why-married-men-work-harder-and-smarter-and-make-more-money/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/inspired-life/wp/2015/04/02/dont-be-a-bachelor-why-married-men-work-harder-and-smarter-and-make-more-money/</a>.
- [32] McLanahan, Sara S. and Marcia J. Carlson. 2001. "Poverty and Gender in Affluent Nations," International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, editors-in-chief, Volume 17 (Oxford, Elsevier Science Limited, 2001), 11894-900. Available online at <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B0080430767039838">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B0080430767039838</a>.
- [33] U.S. Census, "Table A3. Parents With Coresident Children Under 18, by Living Arrangement, Sex, and Selected Characteristics: 2020," <a href="https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/demo/families/cps-2020.html">https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/demo/families/cps-2020.html</a>.
- [34] Some of the male-headed percentages are impacted by unusual circumstances and small numbers in more sparsely populated counties, given that this family type for children is much less common. For example, in Somerset County, there were only 248 children in such households, 194 (seventy eight percent) of whom were poor. Still, the percentages are accurate.
- [35] For Figure 10a, r = -.825. For Figure 10b, r = .846. Both have a chance of error less than .001. The percentage African American was significantly negatively correlated to the percentage of children living in married couple households (-.521; Sig. .009), and also significantly positive correlated to both the percentage of children living in female headed households (.544; Sig. .005) and the percentage of children under the poverty limit (.425; Sig. .038). So both correlations between family structure and poverty for children under 18 were re-analyzed using linear regression to control for the percentage African American. Even with the percent African American controlled, both remained highly significant. For the correlation shown in Figure 10a Beta was -.852, and for the correlation shown in Figure 10b it was .897—both with a chance of error of less than .001.
- [36] Emily J. Hanson, "Violent Crime Trends, 1990-2021," In Focus, Congressional Research Service, December 12, 2022, <a href="https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12281">https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12281</a>.
- [37] These are violent and property index crimes as defined by the UCR. The violent crime index includes murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Violent crimes are defined in the UCR Program as those offenses that involve "force or threat of force." <a href="https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s-2019/topic-pages/violent-crime">https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s-2019/topic-pages/violent-crime</a>. The property crime index includes burglary, larcenytheft, motor vehicle theft. Arson is technically in this index but for various reasons is not part of volume reports. Such crimes are directed toward money and property. <a href="https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s-2019/topic-pages/property-crime">https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s-2019/topic-pages/property-crime</a>.
- [38] Statista, "Reported violent crime rate in the United States in 2020, by state," <a href="https://www.statista.com/statistics/200445/reported-violent-crime-rate-in-the-us-states/">https://www.statista.com/statistics/200445/reported-violent-crime-rate-in-the-us-by-states/</a>; and "Property crime rate in the United States in 2020, by state," <a href="https://www.statista.com/statistics/232575/property-crime-rate-in-the-us-by-state/">https://www.statista.com/statistics/232575/property-crime-rate-in-the-us-by-state/</a>.

- [39] https://goccp.maryland.gov/data-dashboards/crime-dashboard/. Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services.
- [40] See for example Aaron Gottlieb and Naomi F. Sugie, "Marriage, Cohabitation, and Crime: Differentiating Associations by Partnership Stage," Justice Quarterly 36, No. 3 (2019): 503-31. See also the research review by Torbjørn Skardhamar, Jukka Savolainen, Kjersti N. Aase, and Torkild H. Lyngstad, "Does Marriage Reduce Crime?," Crime and Justice 44 (2015): 385-446.
- [41] Alexandra Thompson and Susannah N. Tapp, "Crime Victimization, 2021," Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, September, 2022, revised July 5, 2023, 4, <a href="https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv21.pdf">https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv21.pdf</a>
- [42] For Figure 10a, r = -.802. For Figure 10b, r = -.733. Both have a chance of error of less than .001. The percentage of the population that is white was significantly positively correlated with the percentage of households headed by married couples (.480; Sig. .018), and significantly negatively correlated with both the violent (-.436; Sig. .033) and property (-.422; Sig. .04) crime rates. And the percentage of the population that is African American was significantly negatively correlated with the percentage of households headed by married couples (-.659; Sig. <.001), and significantly positively correlated with both the violent (.601; Sig. .002) and property (.534; Sig. .007) crime rates. So both correlations between household marital status and crime rates were re-analyzed using linear regression to control for both the percentages white and African American. Even with these controlled, both correlations between household marital status and crime remained highly significant: for violent crime rates Beta was -.674; Sig. .002, and for property crime rates it was -.705; Sig. .005.
- [43] The percentage African American was significantly negatively correlated with the percentage of children in families who were living with married couples (-.537; Sig. .007). And it was significant positively associated with males carrying weapons at school (.623; Sig. <.001), males having physical fights at school (.807; Sig. <.001), and females experiencing dating violence (.411; Sig. .046). So, these three associations were reanalyzed using linear regression to control for the percentage African American. Even with this control, the association between percent of children in married households and carrying weapons (Beta = -.683; Sig. <.001), having physical fights (Beta = -.321; Sig. .028), and females suffering dating violence (Beta = -.448; Sig. .049) remained significant.
- [44] This is CDC data, provided in easy-to-use format by KFF. <a href="https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/suicide-rate/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D">https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/suicide-rate/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D</a>. Given the raw numbers of suicides (for example, just 620 state-wide in Maryland in 2021—see <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/suicide-rates-by-state.html">https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/suicide-rate/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D</a>. Given the raw numbers of suicides (for example, just 620 state-wide in Maryland in 2021—see <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/suicide-rates-by-state.html">https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/suicide-rates-by-state.html</a>), rates in counties with less population are unreliable and often not provided in easy-to-access ways. Thus, there is no county table here.
- [45] Baltimore City is completely excluded from these county figures provided by Mental Health America. They are not lumped in with Baltimore County or any other county.
- [46] Again, this school year was chosen as it corresponds best with the 2021 ACS 5-year estimates; see below.
- [47] As we have already noted, the percentage African American is negatively and significantly correlated with the percentage of children in families living with married couples (see footnote #43). Percent African American was also significantly and positively correlated with having made a suicide plan (.549; Sig. 005). So this correlation was re-analyzed using linear regression to control for percent African American. The association was still negative and significant (Beta = -.547; Sig. 006).
- [48] As we have already seen, the percentage African American was significantly negatively correlated with the percentages of children in families living with married couple (see footnote #43). It was significantly positively correlated with the percentages having sex by age 13 (but none of these other sexual activity measures). Using linear regression on this latter correlation to control for the percentage African Americans, the association between the percentages of children in families living with married couples and having sex by age 13 was still significantly negative (Beta = -.521; Sig. .005).
- [49] As we have seen, the percentage African American is significantly and negatively associated with the percentage of children in families who are living with a married couple (see footnote #43). All three of these YRBS drug measures that are significantly negatively correlated with the percentages of children in families living with married parents were also significantly and positively related to the percentage African American (illegal use of pain medication .646; Sig. <.001; hard drugs .473; Sig. .02; obtained drugs on school property .554; Sig. .005). So these three associations were re-analyzed, using regression to control for the percent African American. For illegally using pain medications, this correlation was then no longer significant (Beta = -.320, Sig. .098). For the average of the 4 percentages using hard drugs (cocaine, heroin, meth, and ecstasy), the correlation was still powerful and significant (Beta = -.796; Sig. <.001). The same was true for obtaining illegal drugs on school property (Beta = -.773; Sig. <.001).
- [50] 2022 Maryland School Report Card, Maryland State Department of Education, https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/.
- [51] As identified earlier, these percentages of children living in married couple families come from the 2021 ACS 5 Year Estimates, U.S. Census. Here, the decision was made to use the 2021-22 report card scores, given that, for students, these are a culmination of their experience over time. Thus, if marriage makes a difference for these children and youth's educational outcome, where they have arrived in 2021-22 will certainly reflect—among many other factors—the home lives they have experienced immediately up to that point. The other alternative in the report card is 2018-19 figures, and it is highly doubtful that any correlations between these and the percentages of children living in married couple families would look much different.

- [52] Except for High School ELA proficiency, the rest of these outcome measures were significantly and negatively associated with the percentages in these counties who are African American (in the order presented in these tables, left to right, first Table 19a then Table 19b: -.691; Sig. <.001; -.684; Sig. <.001; -.600; Sig. .002; -.620; Sig. .001; -.458; Sig. .024; -.299; Sig. .155; -.436; Sig. 033; -.762; Sig. <.001). As we have already seen, the percent African American is also significantly and negatively associated with the percent of children in families who are living with married couples (see footnote #43). So, each of these associations other than High School ELA was reexamined using regression to control for percent African American. Beta's for the association of these measures with the percentages of children in families living with married couples, with percent African American controlled, were as follows: Elementary Math (.540; Sig. <.001), Elementary ELA (.638; Sig. <.001), Middle School Math (.489; Sig. .012); Middle School ELA (.626; Sig. .001), High School Math (.822; Sig. <.001), Attendance (.859; Sig. <.001), and 4-Year Graduation Rates (.462.; Sig. .002). All of these associations were still powerful and significant, many of them actually stronger with percent African American controlled.
- [53] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023). Though Kearney identifies the problems, without promoting marriage the cures she proposes are not enough, especially as they have too often been tried already. An excellent review and discussion of this important new book is W. Bradford Wilcox's September 21, 2023 "The Two-Parent Advantage," in American Enterprise Institute's City Journal. <a href="https://cosm.aei.org/the-two-parent-advantage/">https://cosm.aei.org/the-two-parent-advantage/</a>. See also Charles Fain Lehman's September 18, 2023 review of Kearney's book, "The Ultimate Privilege? Two Parents," Institute for Family Studies, <a href="https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-ultimate-privilege-two-parents">https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-ultimate-privilege-two-parents</a>.
- [54] "Do Two Parents Matter More Than Ever?," Institute for Family Studies, September 20, 2023. <u>Do Two Parents Matter More Than Ever?</u> Institute for Family Studies (ifstudies.org)
- [55] "Dan Quayle Was Right." The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 271, No. 4, (1993): 47-84, page 80.
- [56] We avoided doing this in the present report.
- [57] Fatherless in Massachusetts: The Economic and Social Costs to Our Commonwealth, 2023, page 40. <u>Fatherlessness-in-MA-2023-Final-Report.pdf</u> (mafamily.org).
- [58] See Shady Grove Fertility, "Maryland Mandate opens new door for single mothers by choice," February 23, 2021. Maryland Mandate Opens New Door for Single Mothers by Choice | Shady Grove Fertility. And also the American Society for Reproductive Medicine's "Maryland: Coverage," Maryland Insurance | Reproductive Facts.org. (Undated.)
- [59] Marissa Conrad, "How Much Does IVF Cost?," Forbes, August 14, 2023. <a href="https://www.forbes.com/health/womens-health/how-much-does-ivf-cost/">https://www.forbes.com/health/womens-health/how-much-does-ivf-cost/</a>.
- [60] William Ombelet, "IUI or 'Artificial Insemination': The Cost Of IUI," FertilityIQ, <a href="https://www.fertilityiq.com/iui-or-artificial-insemination/the-cost-of-iui#components-of-iui-cycle-cost">https://www.fertilityiq.com/iui-or-artificial-insemination/the-cost-of-iui#components-of-iui-cycle-cost</a>. (Undated, current course.)
- [61] For example, Becca Stanek ("Female Fertility by Age," Forbes, August 14, 2023) reports that "women between the ages of 40 and 44 have a 30% chance of infertility, compared to a 7.3% to 9.1% chance for women up to age 34." https://www.forbes.com/health/womens-health/female-fertility-by-age/. According to the Census' ACS 2021 5 Year Estimates, recently Maryland had close to 106,000 never married women between the ages of 35 and 44 (25.8% of the 410,034 total). Most will not choose to deliberately become single mothers, and fewer still will need fertility treatment to do so, but all this is growing and future costs of this expanded mandate will almost certainly rise significantly given trends in marriage rates and out-of-wedlock birth.
- [62] Janelle Fritts, "Does Your State Have a Marriage Penalty"," August 16, 2022.
- [63] Carrie Pallardy, "States' Laws & Insurance Coverage for Fertility Treatments & Medication," Investopedia, October 7, 2022. <u>States' Laws & Coverage for Fertility Treatments & Medication (investopedia.com)</u>.
- [64] Sex Education Collaborative, "Maryland: State Sex Education Policies and Requirements at a Glance," <a href="https://sexeducationcollaborative.org/states/maryland">https://sexeducationcollaborative.org/states/maryland</a>.
- [65] Maryland State Department of Education, "State Standards and Frameworks in Social Studies." <a href="https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DCAA/Social-Studies/MSSS.aspx">https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DCAA/Social-Studies/MSSS.aspx</a>.
- [66] The People's Law Library of Maryland, "No Fault Grounds for Absolute Divorce." <a href="https://www.peoples-law.org/no-fault-grounds-absolute-divorce">https://www.peoples-law.org/no-fault-grounds-absolute-divorce</a>.
- [67] Maryland Courts, "Divorce." <a href="https://mdcourts.gov/legalhelp/family/divorce">https://mdcourts.gov/legalhelp/family/divorce</a>. Here is the actual law: <a href="https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=gfl&section=7-103">https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=gfl&section=7-103</a>.
- [68] Erikson, Julia Chan, "Relations," World News Group, October 16, 2023.
- [69] For this and other discussion of the impact and history of no-fault divorce, see Carter, Joe, "5 Facts About No Fault Divorce," The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission," August 16, 2019. <a href="https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/5-facts-about-no-fault-divorce/">https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/5-facts-about-no-fault-divorce/</a>.
- [70] With Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "End No Fault Divorce: A Symposium," First Things, August 1997. <a href="https://www.firstthings.com/article/1997/08/end-no-fault-divorce">https://www.firstthings.com/article/1997/08/end-no-fault-divorce</a>.

- [72] Carter, "5 Facts."
- [73] Gallagher and Whitehead, "No-Fault Divorce."
- [74] This suggestion and supporting points are drawn from an excellent op ed by Aidan Johnson, "Protect Children from Divorce," World Opinions, September 15, 2023. <a href="https://wng.org/opinions/protect-children-from-divorce-1694750689">https://wng.org/opinions/protect-children-from-divorce-1694750689</a>.
- [75] Fatherlessness in Massachusetts, 2023, page 42.
- [76] Our of Loneliness and Isolation; The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community, pages 19, 51 and 63.
- [77] Fatherlessness in Massachusetts, page 43.
- [78] Butcher, Jonathan and Bedrick, Jason "2023: The Year of Education Freedom," Heritage Backgrounder, September 11, 2023.
- [79] "Do Two Parents Matter More Ever?"
- [80] Fatherlessness in Massachusetts, page 42.
- [81] Fatherlessness in Massachusetts, page 42.



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