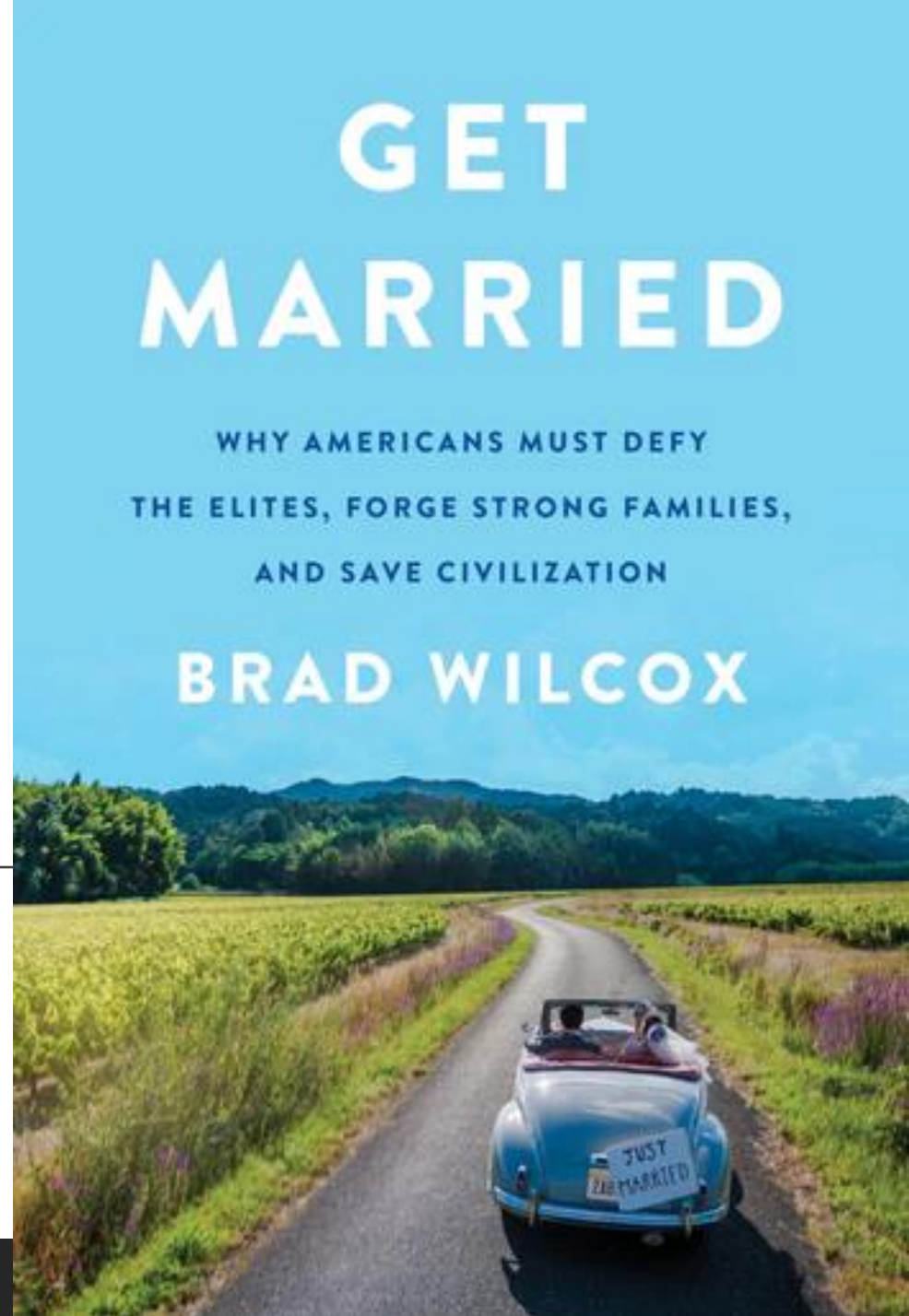


Better Together: 5 Pillars of a Strong & Stable Marriage

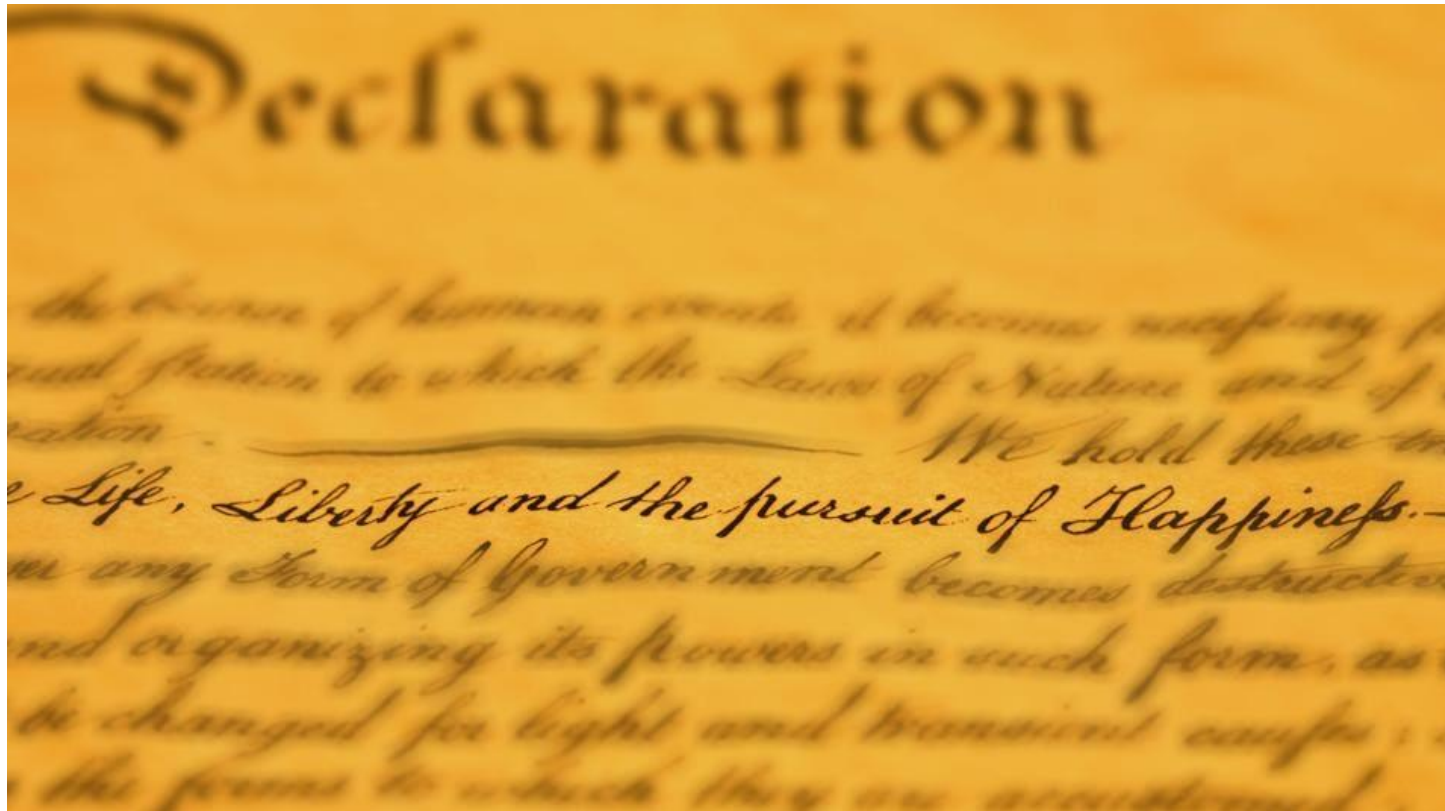
BRAD WILCOX

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA/IFS



In the Shadow of Thomas Jefferson





The Declaration of Independence



**How Are We
Doing when It
Comes to the
Pursuit of
Happiness?**

**Not Very
Well**

American happiness hits record lows

Gallup Poll





Chasing
the Wrong
Things?



**The New Ruling Class
Message: Midas Mindset**

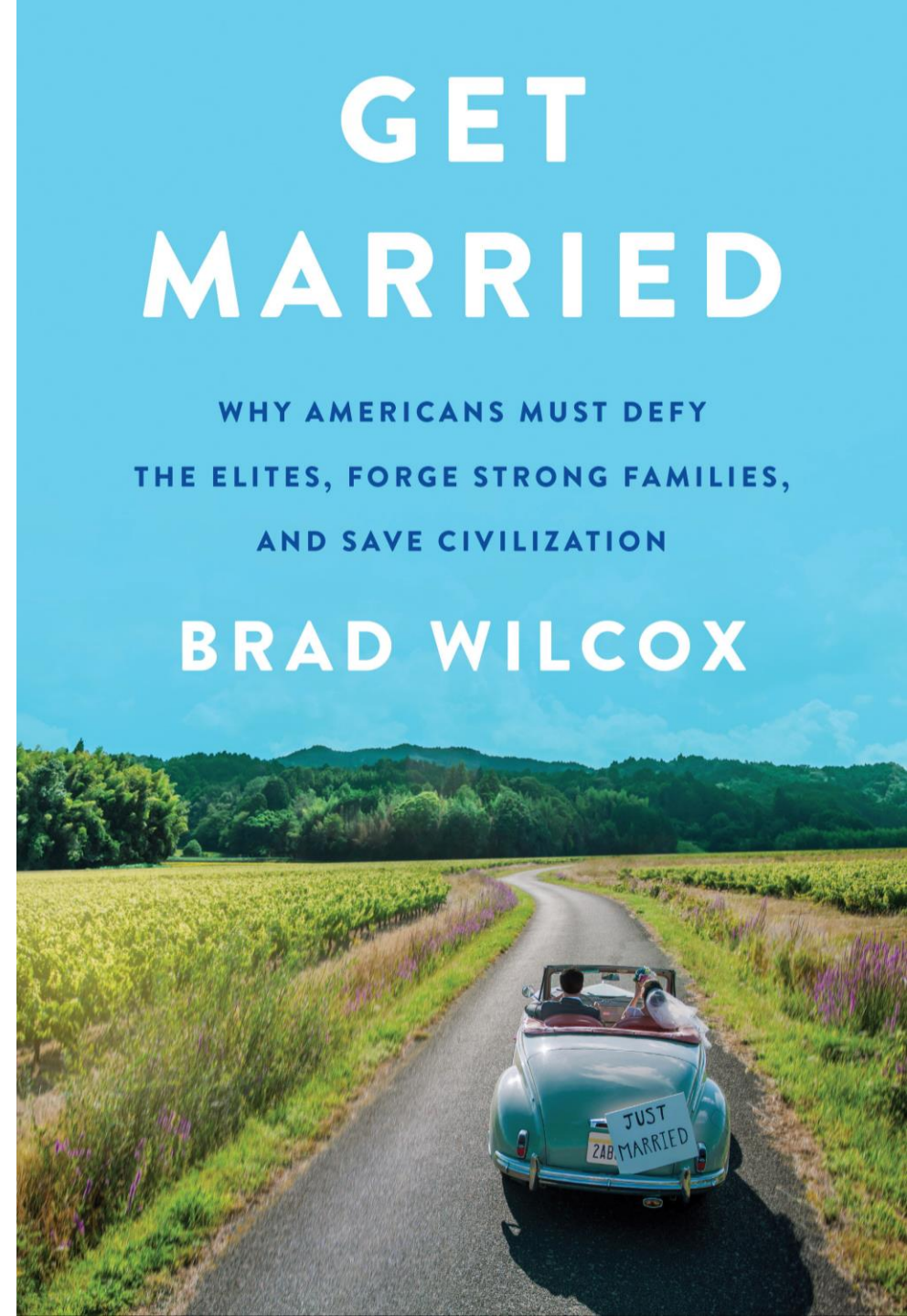
One Night...

I CAME ACROSS SOMETHING ON
TWITTER'S "WHAT'S HAPPENING"
PANEL...

GET MARRIED

WHY AMERICANS MUST DEFY
THE ELITES, FORGE STRONG FAMILIES,
AND SAVE CIVILIZATION

BRAD WILCOX



Businessweek + Equality

Women Who Stay Single and Don't Have Kids Are Getting Richer

Forgoing marriage and parenthood has a bigger payoff for American women than men, according to new research.



Bloomberg



“I love my life and feel
very fulfilled.”
~ Ashley



The Case Against Marriage - The At...
theatlantic.com

The New York Times

“Married heterosexual motherhood
in America... is a game no one
wins,” ~ Amy Shearn, *New York
Times*



The Red Pill Right





Midas Mindset

Shapes thinking of many U.Va. students:

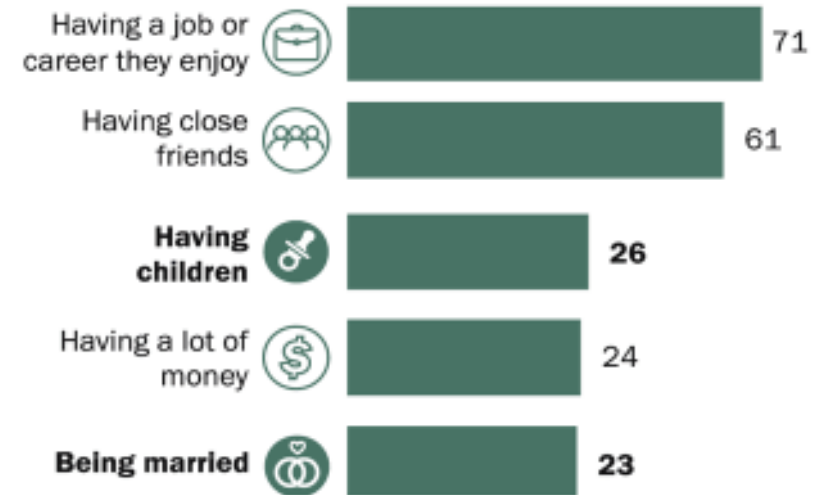
- Holly: “Basically the thought process is relationships, love, etc. are a risk but you will always have your career and success to fall back on.”

The Polls

Many Americans think **education, work & money** more “important” for **fulfillment** than marriage & family

Marriage and parenthood are seen as less important to living a fulfilling life

% saying each is *extremely or very important* in order for people to live a fulfilling life



Note: Response options also included “Somewhat important,” “Not too important” and “Not at all important.”

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 10-16, 2023.

“Public Has Mixed Views on the Modern American Family”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Cultural
Shift Helps
Explain
Why...

The Bad News

ABOUT MARRIAGE

The American Heart is Closing

U.S. Marriage Rate Close to All-time Low in 2021

Number of newly married people per 1,000 unmarried Americans ages 15+

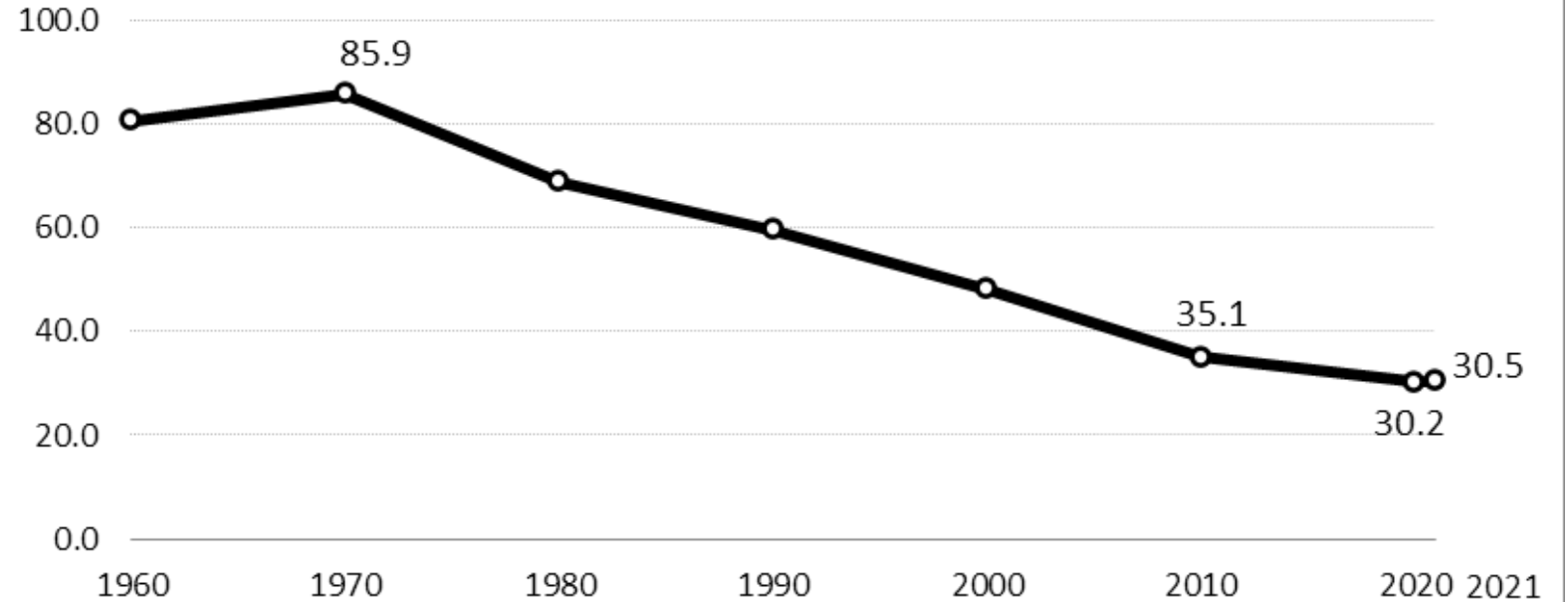


Figure 1.4. (Source: Institute for Family studies, "New Census Data: Key Takeaways on Divorce, Marriage, and Fertility in the U.S.," Sep 22, 2022.)

1-in-3
Young
Adults Will
Never Marry





Scott's Story

Graduate Degree

Good Job

Six-Figure Salary

But...

A woman with curly hair is shown in profile, looking out over a sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The background is a blurred landscape with water and distant hills. The woman is wearing a patterned sweater.

Biggest Driver of Falling Happiness

The “recent decline in the married share of adults can explain (statistically) most of the recent decline in overall happiness.”

~ University of Chicago economist Sam Peltzman (2023)



Nothing Matters
for Happiness
like a (Good)
Marriage

Marriage Predicts Happiness Better than Education, Work, and Money

Odds of being "very happy" increase by...

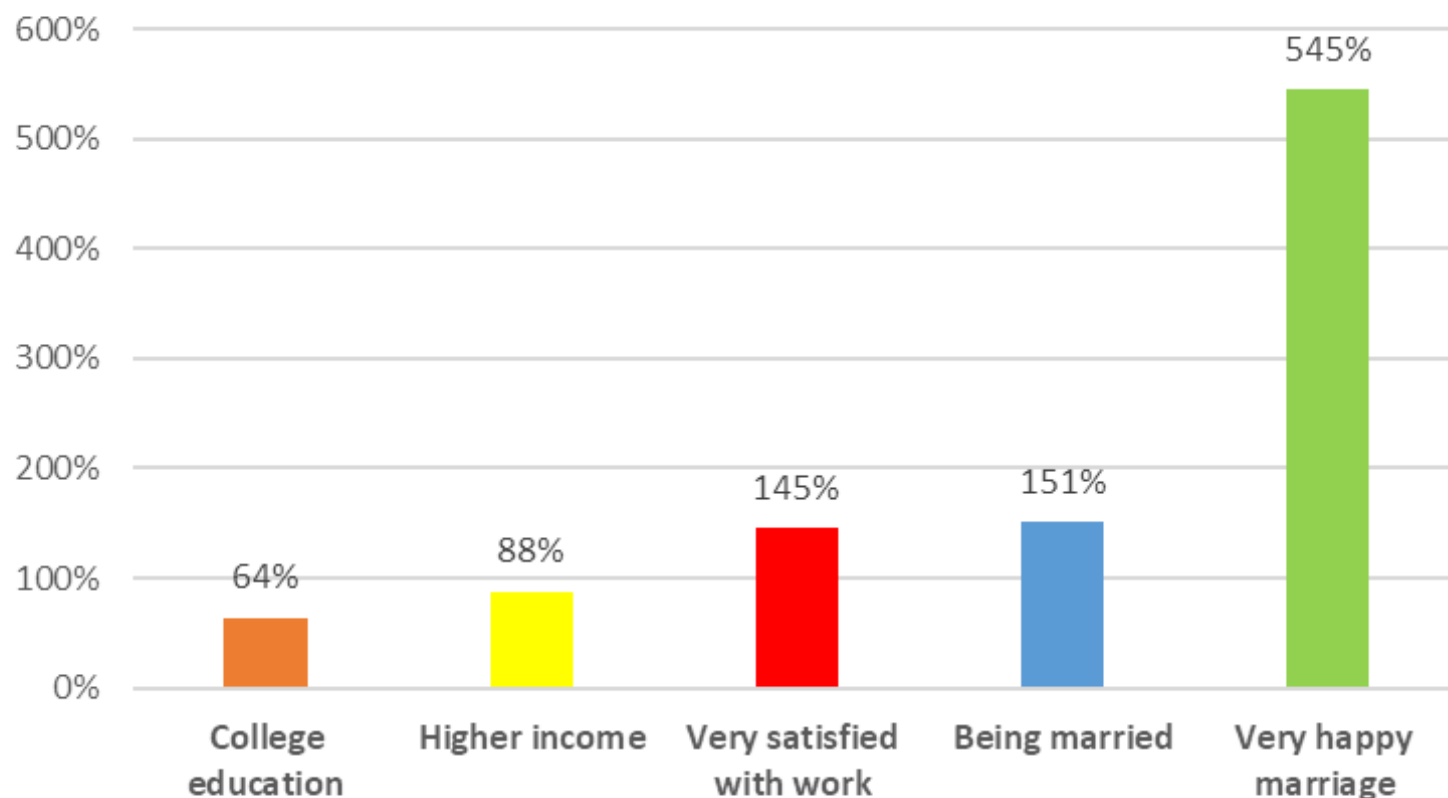


Figure 1.1. Based on adults ages 18-55. Higher income refers to family income $\geq 60K$ a year. Each model controls for race, gender and age. (Source: General Social Survey, 2014-2018)



Aristotle

“Man is by nature a social animal.”

— Aristotle, *Politics*

Any Good
News about
Marriage?

The Good News



Four groups of
Americans are
bucking the tide

Markedly
happier for it

Who are the Masters of Marriage?

Asian Americans

Conservatives

Strivers (college-educated)

The Faithful





What's Their Secret?

Defy Elite Ideology

Familism > Individualism

Commitment > Choice

Tradition > the New



5 Pillars of a Strong & Stable Marriage

Communion

Children

Commitment

Cash

Community



A photograph of two white swans on a body of water. Their necks are curved towards each other, forming a heart shape. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and white, suggesting a bright, sunny day. The swans have white feathers and black and orange beaks.

1. Communion

Elites stress a “me-first”
approach to marriage that
privileges autonomy,
freedom, and self-interest.

Me-First Money

“I want you to have both a joint *and* a separate one. The former ensures that you're protected as a couple... [But] if the relationship doesn't work out, you will have your own nest egg to fall back on. .” ~ Suze Orman





Our Money

What is “yours is mine and mine is yours. And now we’re [going to be] married and it’s all equal.” ~ Jon Erickson

Couples Who Pool Income Happier, Less Prone to Divorce

*Marital Quality and Perceived Stability among Husbands and Wives,
by Whether They Pool All Income Versus Keep Separate Accounts*

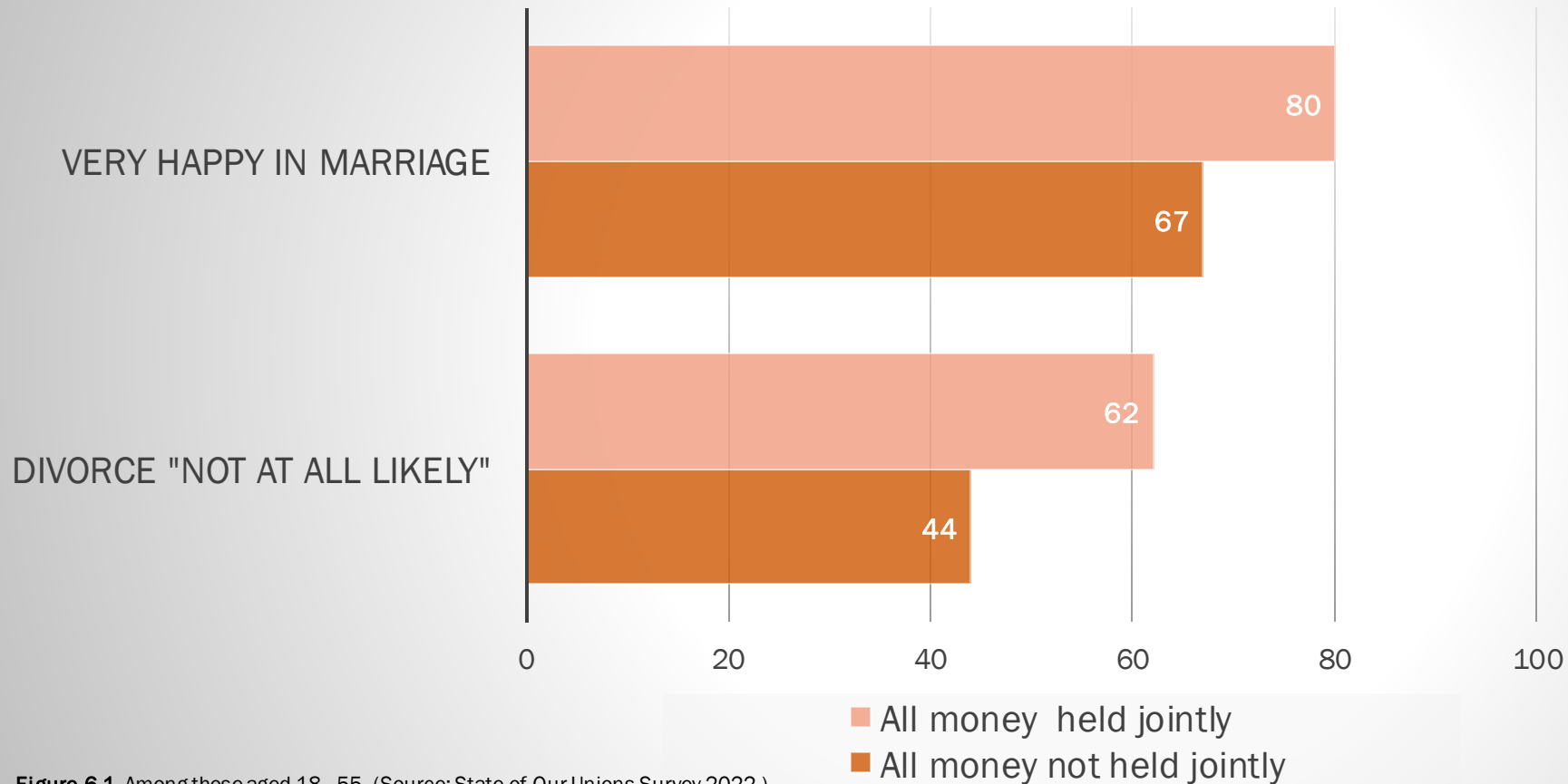


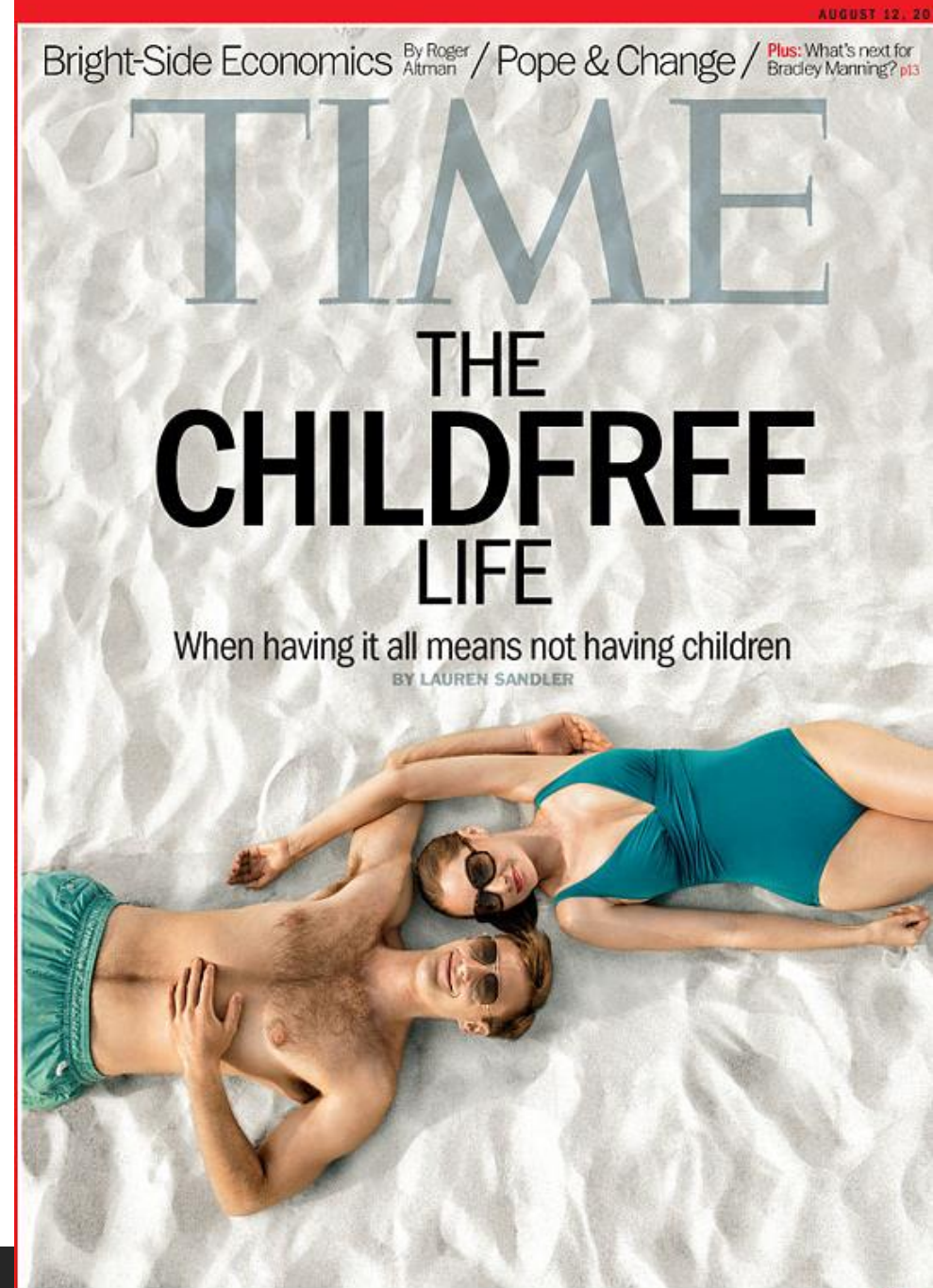
Figure 6.1. Among those aged 18 - 55. (Source: State of Our Unions Survey 2022.)

Couples who take a “we-before-me” approach to marriage that is predicated on a sense of unity, teamwork, and mutual service are much more likely to flourish.

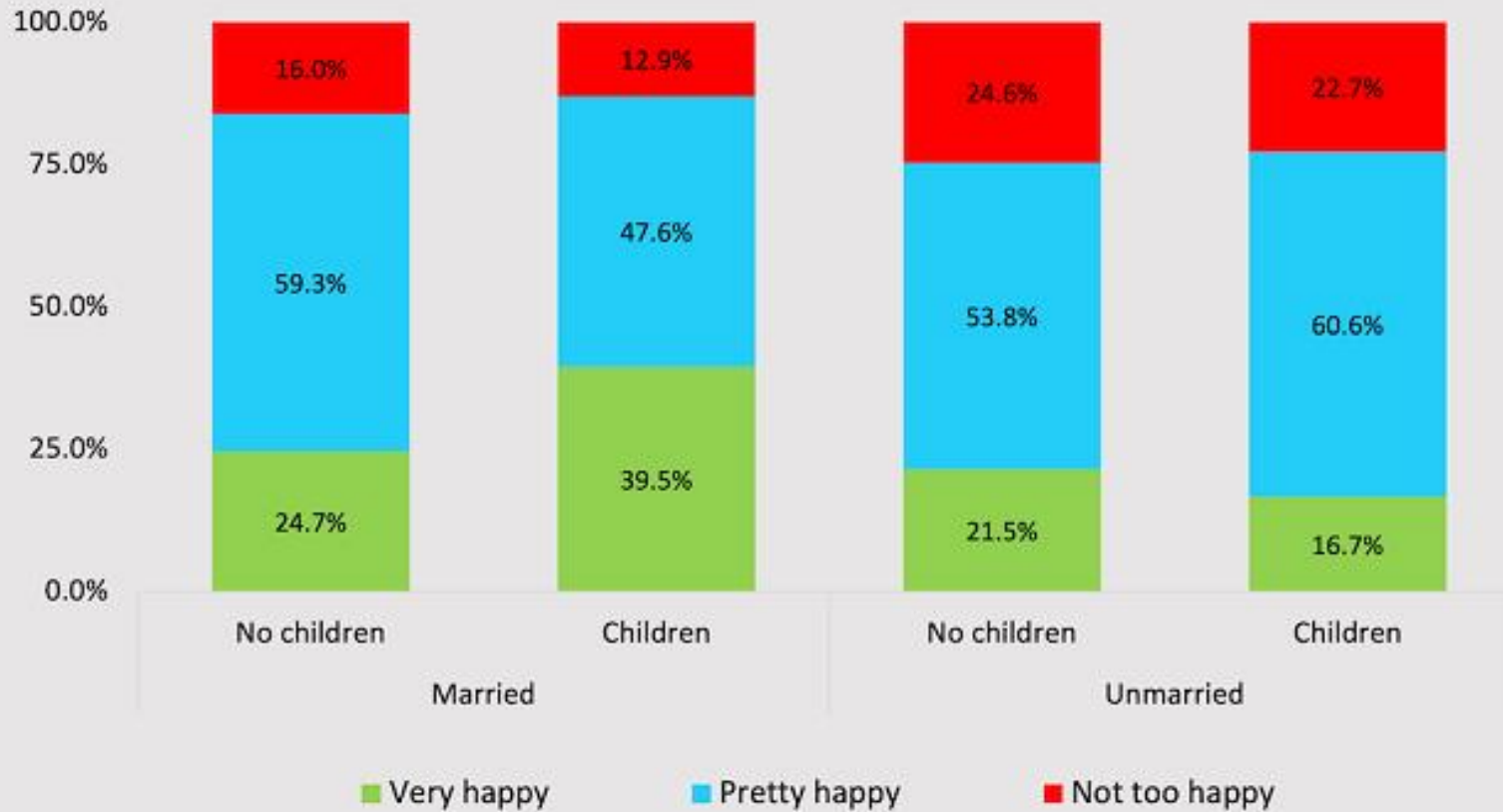


2. Child-centered

Children are an Obstacle to Living Your Best Life & Love



Women's Happiness by Marital Status and Children, Ages 18-55



Based on women ages 18-55. Source: General Social Survey, 2022

Institut for
Family Studies

But No
Group is
Happier than
Married Dads
& Moms

Couples Who Embrace Children Are Happier & Less Prone to Divorce



- Married fathers and mothers who completely agree that “one of marriage’s key purposes is to give children the best shot at life” are 40 percent more likely to report that they do not see divorce in their future
- Above-average “fun” time with children 10 percentage points more likely to be very happy
- Above-average family chore time 17 percentage points more likely to be very happy



3. Commitment

The new elite view privileges
contingent commitment over
marital permanence and
sexual choices over sexual
fidelity.



Sexual Choices

“This is about respecting your adult daughter’s choices... As a show of respect, read up on polyamory before you broach the subject with her. Then ask questions. I am not suggesting that you set aside all of your concerns — only that you try to respect your adult daughter’s decisions. In a more open-minded context, you may find that the trip to Greece resolves itself.”

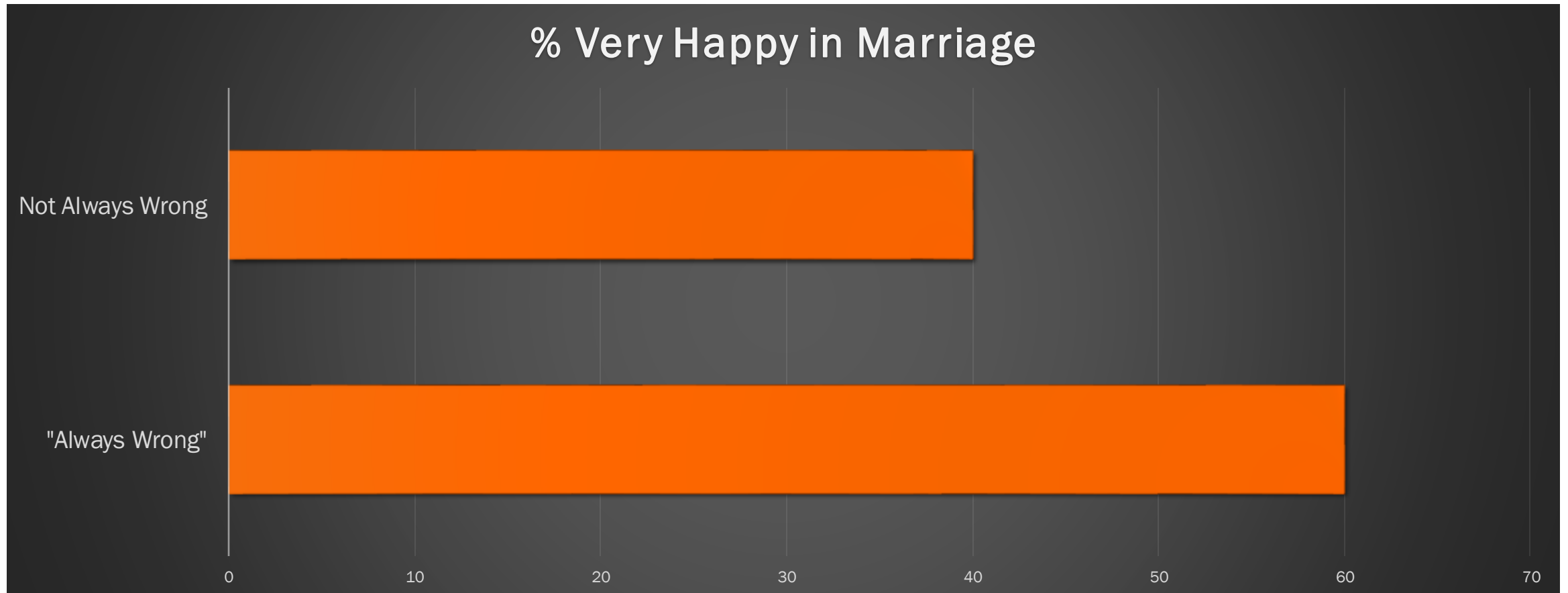
~ Philip Galanes, *New York Times*



“I’m a family man.”

“When I’m meeting new people in my line of work, I talk a lot about my wife and kids. I want them to know I’m a family man.” ~ Patrick Reilly

Marital Happiness, By Infidelity Attitude



1 Predictor of Marital
Quality is...
Commitment

4. Cash



New Elite View Minimizes Male Breadwinner

“Husbands Who Have
Wives Who Outearn
Them Are Happier than
Those Who Don’t,”
Slate says, adding

“decoupling
breadwinning from
masculinity is
associated with
concrete benefits for
both men and women”

But...

Decent paying,
stable job, especially
for the husband, is a
strong predictor of
marital stability.



The Harvard Study

MEN WHO LOSE THEIR JOBS ARE
33% MORE LIKELY TO DIVORCE

(KILLEWALD 2016)



5. Community



The elite view is that one form of community—religious community—is an obstacle to living your best life and realizing your best love.

Is Faith Bad for Families?



[Q. & A.](#)

A Sociologist of Religion on Protestants, Porn,
and the “Purity Industrial Complex”

By [Isaac Chotiner](#)

THE
NEW YORKER

Martin and Kimberly's Story

Even when he's on the internet checking out his favorite news and music sites, Martin's careful. "I mean it's one of those things where, you know the Bible's very clear about fleeing temptation," he said, adding, "So, yeah... certain sites I won't go on."

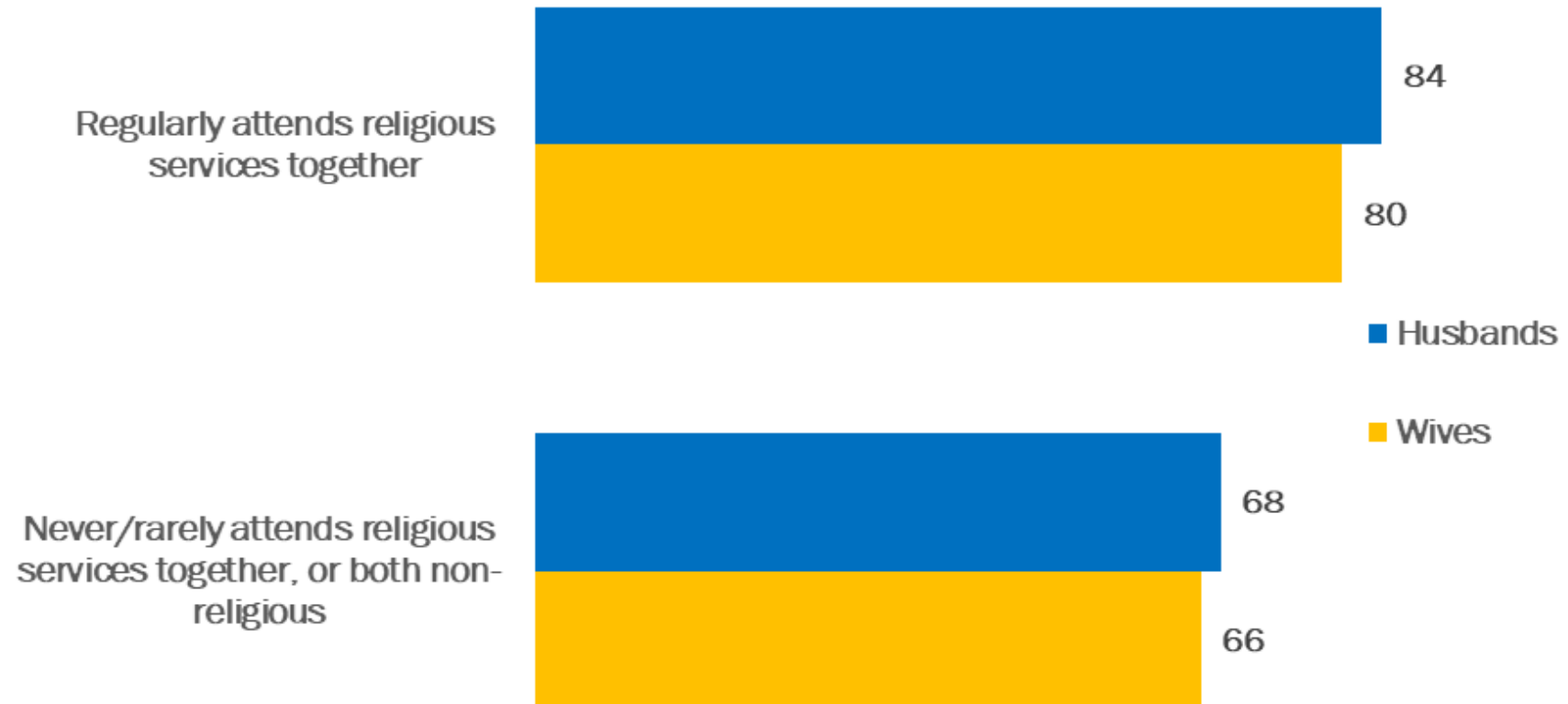
"But that's how prayer entered, because I had some stuff happen prior to us that made [having sex] challenging for me," noted Kimberly, who was sexually abused as a child by a family member. "I'm like 'Okay, God, you're only going to heal [me]... [only] God can really, truly heal this.'"



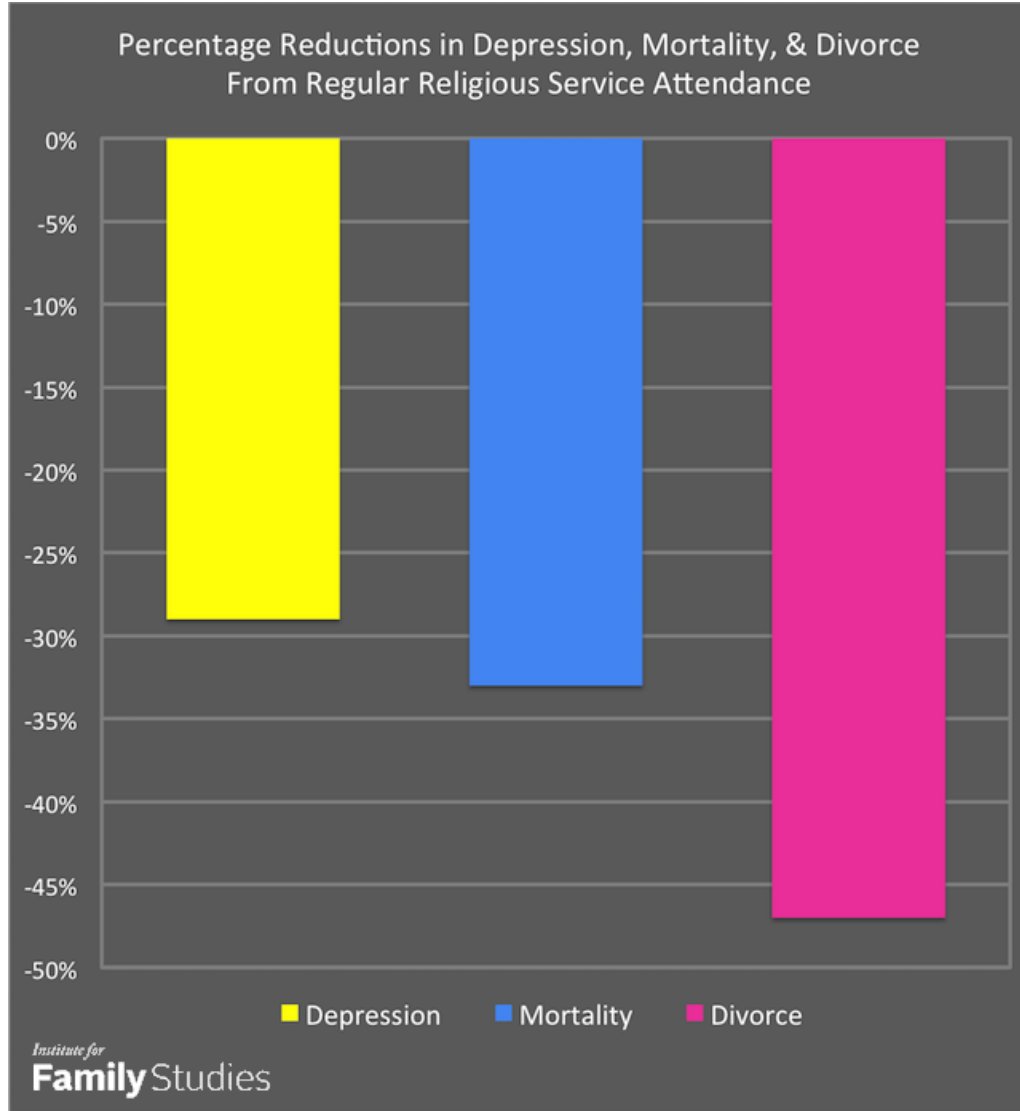
Greater Attendance, More Marital Happiness

Shared Faith, Greater Marital Happiness

% Reporting being "very happy" in their marriage



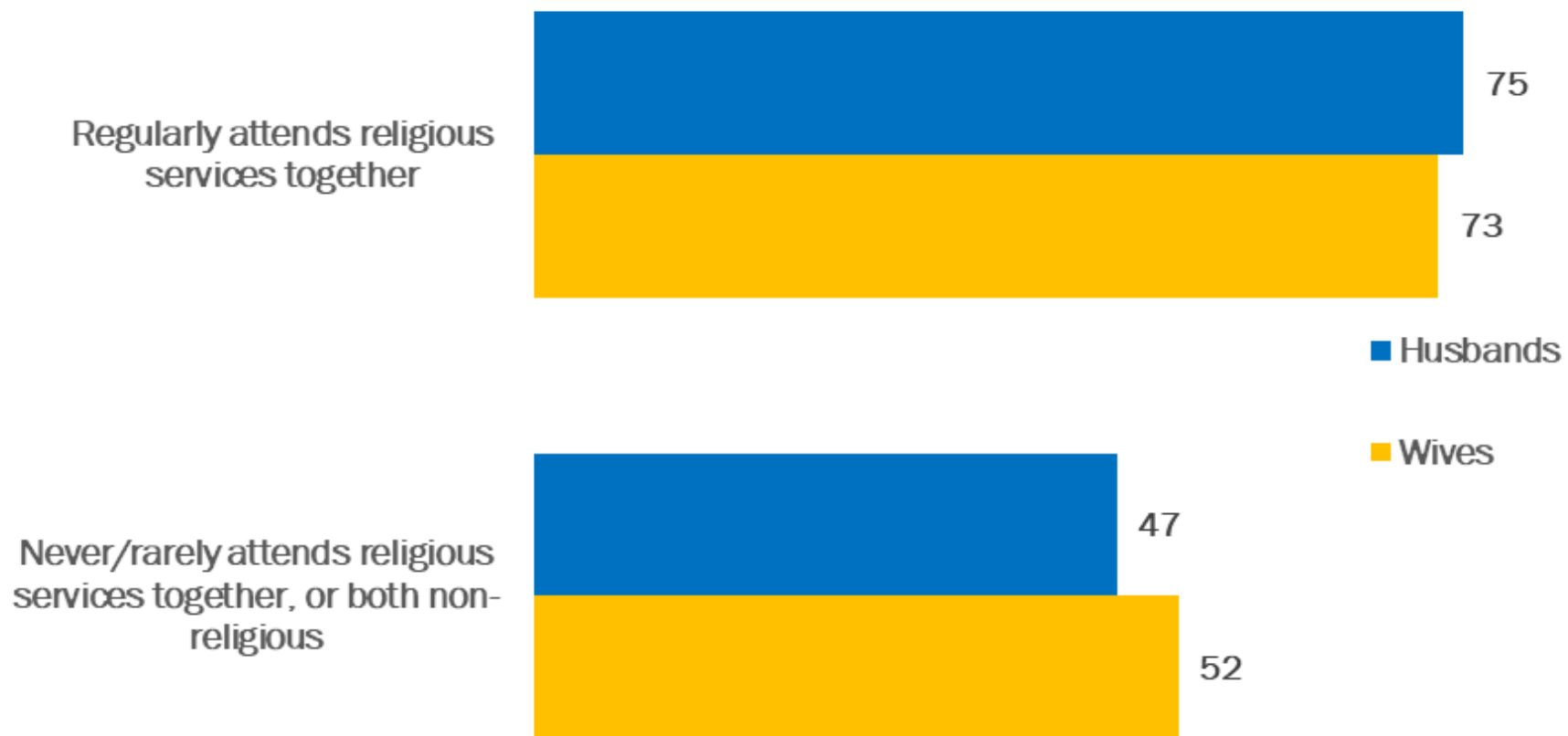
Based on married adults ages 18-55. (Source: State of Our Unions Survey, 2022)



More Faith, Less Divorce
(VanderWeele 2016)

Shared Faith, Better Sex

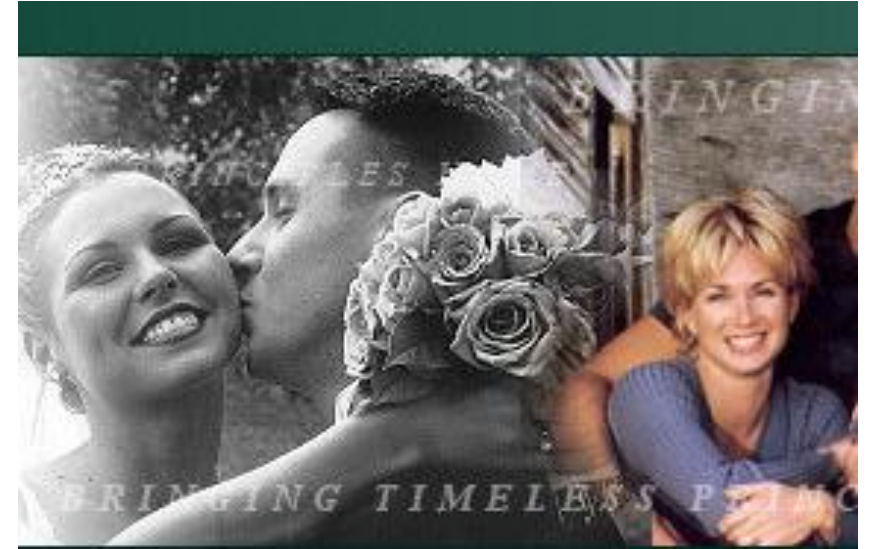
% Reporting being "very happy" with their sexual relationship



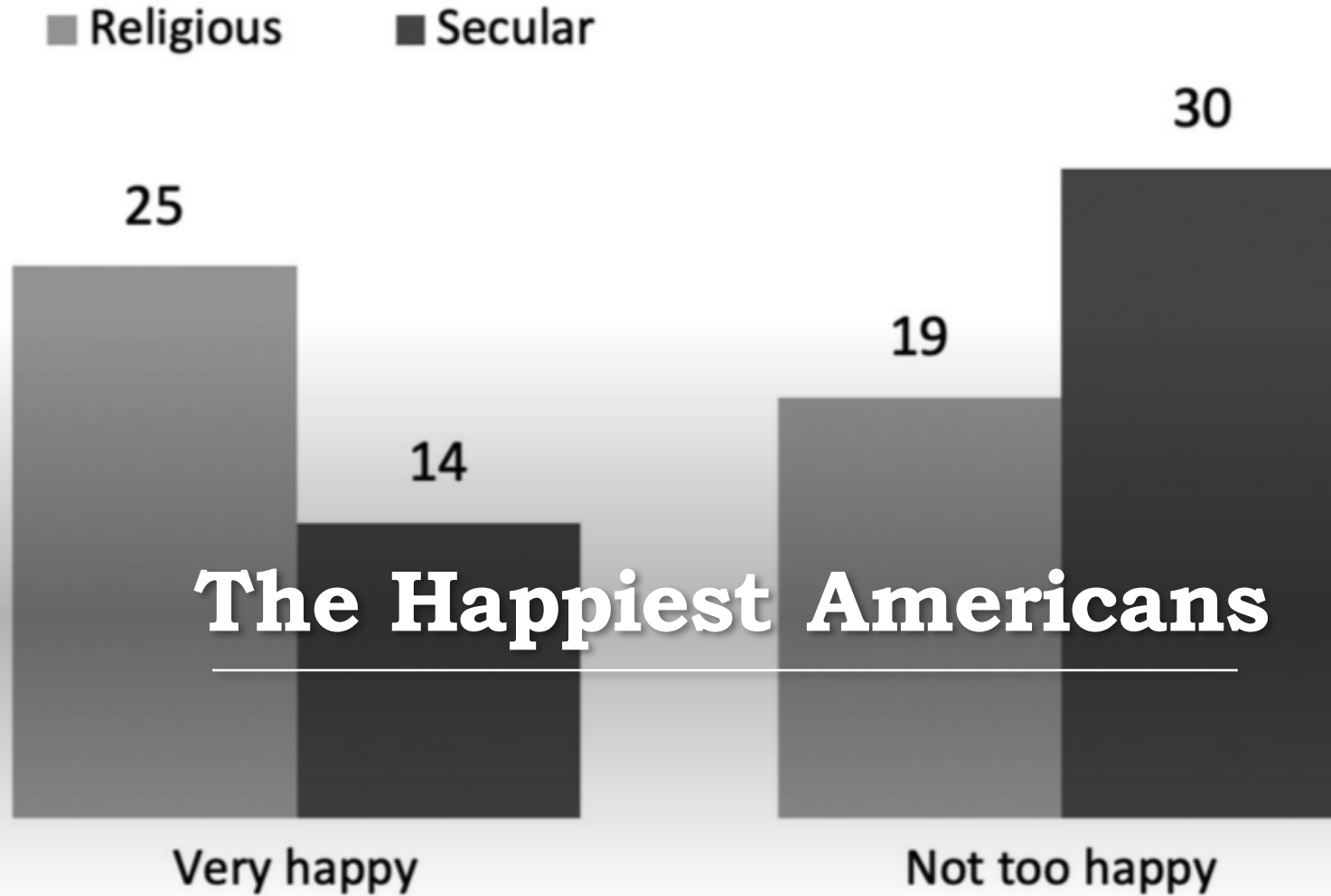
Based on married adults ages 18-55. (Source: State of Our Unions Survey, 2022)

The 3 “Ns”

- The social power of religion:
 - Norms like forgiveness
 - Networks of family-oriented churchgoers
 - Nomos – Universe is meaningful
 - (Wilcox & Nock 2006; Wilcox 2011)



The familistic values, virtues,
and social networks supplied by
religious communities typically
strengthen and stabilize
marriage.



Respondents were asked if they were “very happy,” “pretty happy,” or “not too happy.” “Pretty happy” not shown. “Religious” refers to those who attend religious services at least two to three times a month. “Secular” refers to those who attend services less than

Conclusion: Embracing the Marriage Mindset

Our elite institutions are too devoted to the Midas Mindset. To revive a Marriage Mindset, we need to:

- Reform existing institutions
- Build new institutions
- Expand the work of existing civic and religious efforts to strengthen marriage

There's still time to build a culture centered around the most important thing: **Not mammon, but love.**



Three Steps, with Greater Confidence and Courage:

- 1) Family life education in schools, youth groups & college ministries
- 2) Social media
- 3) Preaching and ministry



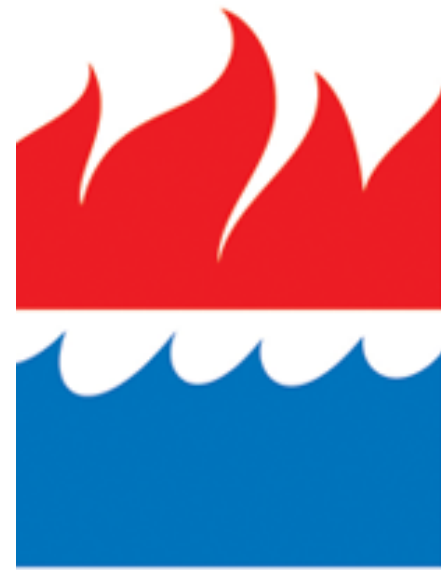


The Pursuit of Happiness

GET MARRIED

WHY AMERICANS MUST DEFEAT
THE ELITES, FORGE STRONG FAMILIES,
AND SAVE CIVILIZATION

BRAD WILCOX



Harper
Collins