

living TOGETHER



by Glenn T. Stanton

Are you thinking about LIVING TOGETHER?

Cohabitation—or “living together”—is the fastest growing living arrangement for couples.

- Since 1960, the number of cohabiting couples has increased fifteen-fold in the U.S.¹
- Cohabiting couples have more than doubled since the mid-1990s.²
- Nearly half of all unmarried women are currently living with a partner or have done so before.

WILL IT HELP YOU BUILD A STRONGER, HEALTHIER RELATIONSHIP?

A lot of research has been done over two decades to answer this important question. So you can learn from the experience of millions of couples who have lived together without being married. You can know the answer!

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*Is living together a good
testing ground for marriage?*
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Couples who live together before marriage are 50 to 80 percent more likely to divorce.
.....



SO, YOU MAY ASK, WHY MARRY SOMEONE WITHOUT LIVING TOGETHER FIRST?

Social scientists no longer wonder about the answer to this question. They've discovered without a doubt that:

- Those who marry today with past cohabiting experience have a 50 to 80 percent higher chance of divorce than other married couples.³
- This is just as true today as it was in the 1960s and 70s. So the greater acceptance of cohabitation has not made it more successful.⁴

YOU WOULDN'T BUY A CAR BEFORE TRYING IT OUT. ISN'T TEST-DRIVING A MARRIAGE SMART?

Here's what two leading scholars say:

"The belief that cohabiting prior to marriage lowers one's odds of divorce has no evidence going for it, yet it is a strongly held belief."⁵

"Scholars increasingly regard cohabitation as a substitute [for] being single, not an alternative to marriage."⁶

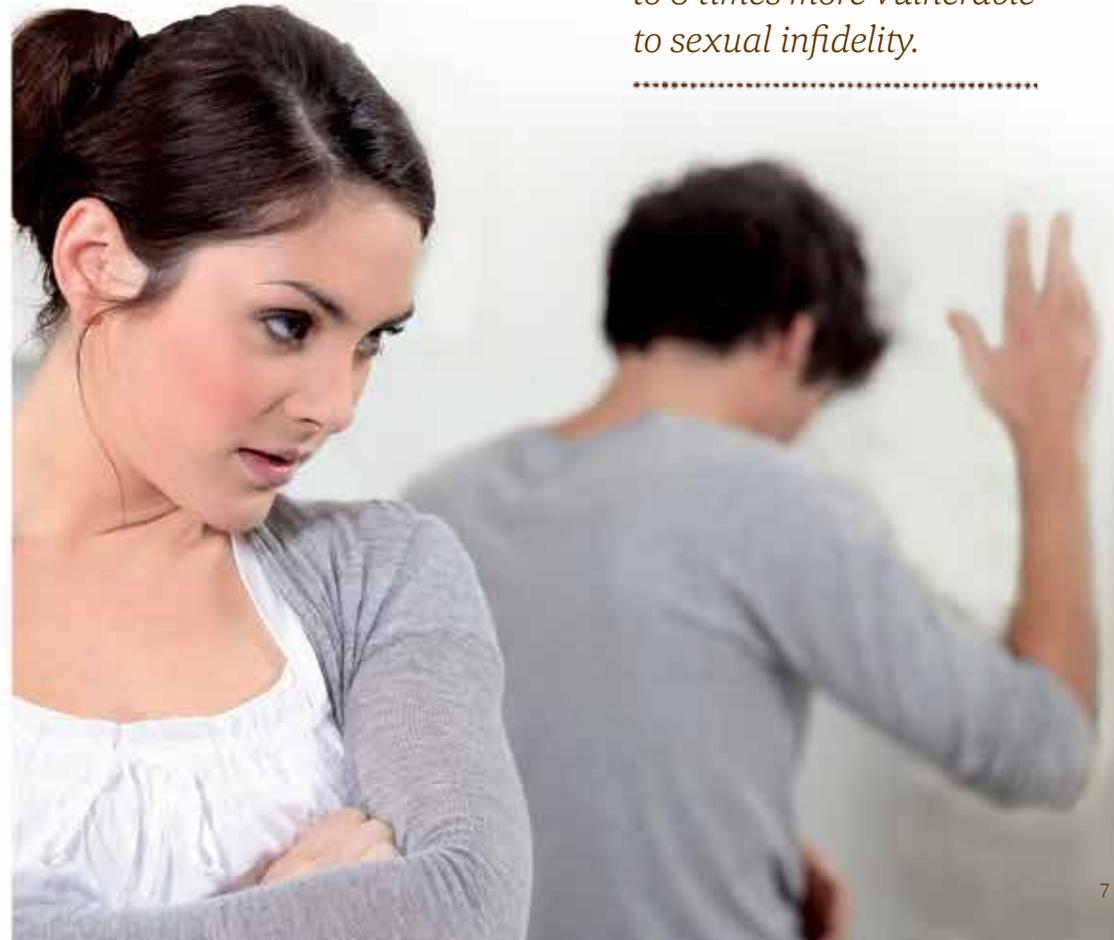
The facts show that if a couple wants to increase their likelihood of divorce to near certainty, there is nothing better that they could do than live together before getting married.

MARRIAGE AND LIVING TOGETHER ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF RELATIONSHIPS.

Couples who live together instead of committing to marriage are in for some disappointing surprises. Even when coming from similar backgrounds, cohabitators tend to have...

- Less healthy, more volatile relationships.⁷
- Break-up rates five times higher than those married.⁸
- 2 to 5 times higher levels of serious physical violence and emotional abuse.⁹
- Decreased sense of ongoing happiness and fairness in their relationships.¹⁰
- 2 to 8 times higher levels of sexual infidelity.¹¹
- Much higher rates of risk-taking behaviors such as drug use, carousing and dangerous driving.¹²

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Couples who cohabit are 2 to 8 times more vulnerable to sexual infidelity.
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*Married couples who lived
together before marriage
struggle with more unhappiness.*
.....



IS MARRIAGE GOOD FOR YOU?

Marriage has been consistently proven to boost the well-being of women, men and children.

A major UCLA study found that “virtually every study of mortality and marital status shows the unmarried of both sexes have higher death rates, whether by accident, disease or self-inflicted wounds.”¹³

Economists say being married boosts overall happiness so strongly that they’ve likened it to having a much higher income; one scholar said it’s like having an extra \$100,000 a year!¹⁴

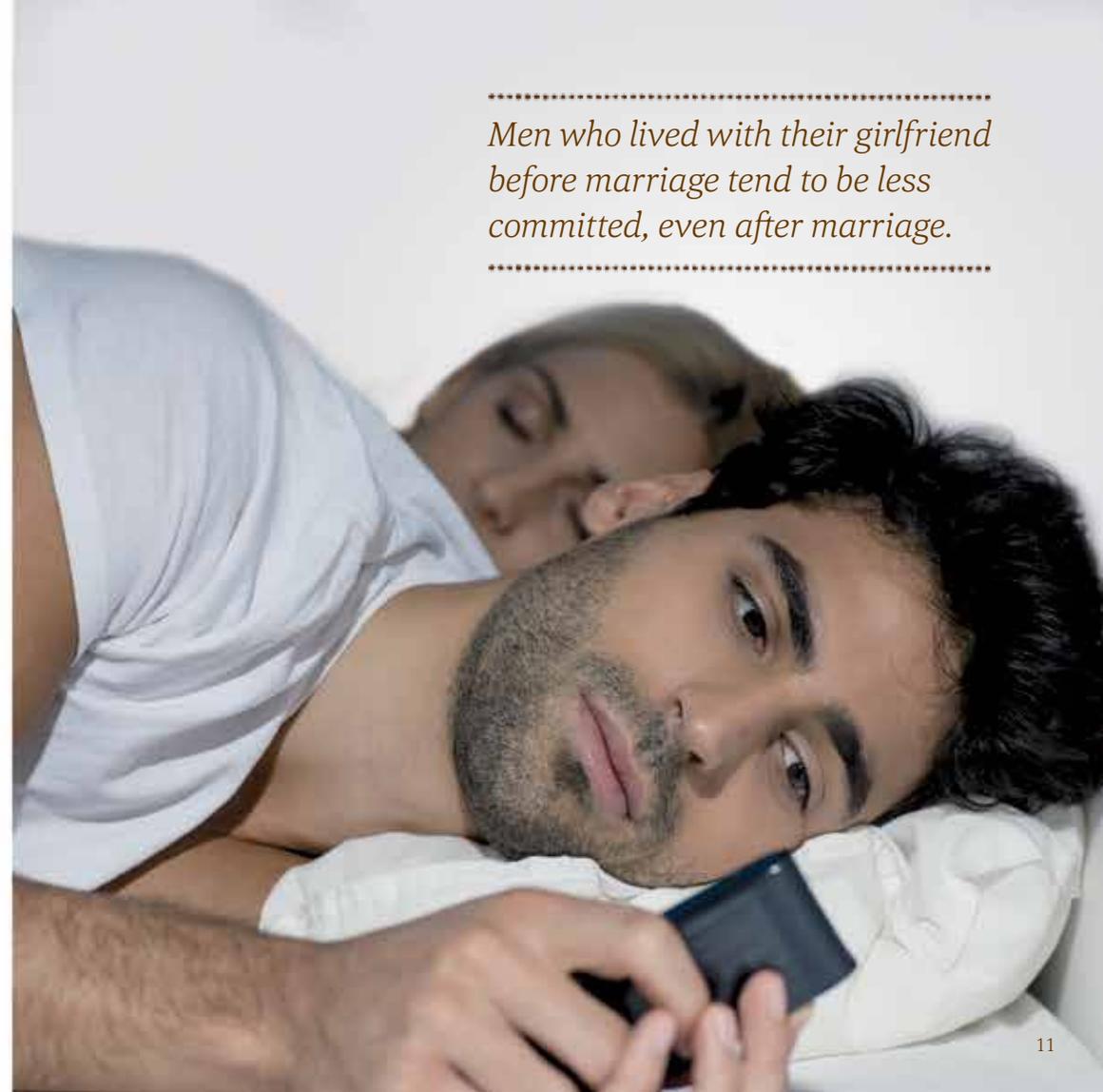
A major study in 17 industrialized nations concluded that being married was 3.4 times more closely associated with general happiness and contentedness than cohabitation was for both men and women.¹⁵

WHO BENEFITS MOST FROM LIVING TOGETHER—WOMEN OR MEN?

While marriage benefits both men and women, a new finding shows that cohabitation tends to harm women more deeply than it harms men.

- **False hope:** Women are consistently more likely to believe their cohabiting relationship is moving toward marriage. The guys are more likely to be just having fun.¹⁶
- **Unequal commitment:** Women are often the ones who are more committed to the relationship. Even when both guy and girl plan on marrying, men who live with their girlfriends before marriage tend to be less committed to the relationship before and after the wedding than women are.¹⁷
- **More power for him:** Even though the man has less commitment to the relationship and less interest in marriage, he is the one with more power to determine whether the relationship ends in marriage or not.¹⁸
- **More work for her:** Cohabiting women are more likely to have to work full-time outside the home compared to married women. And for some reason, women who live with their boyfriends end up doing quite a bit more of the chores and housekeeping than married women!¹⁹

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Men who lived with their girlfriend before marriage tend to be less committed, even after marriage.
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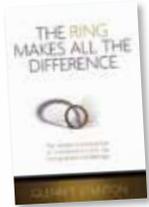
CONCLUSION

So, if you want greater, long-lasting happiness and a partner who:

- is committed to your marriage,
- will be more faithful to you,
- works with you to solve problems,
- is practically and emotionally supportive,
- is less prone to violent behavior, and
- will be less likely to divorce you

...then the research tells us that marriage, not living together, is the way to go.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



Interested in learning more about whether living together gives people what they long for?

*This booklet was adapted from *The Ring Makes All the Difference* by Glenn T. Stanton, which offers additional helpful information about how to build the foundation for a healthy marriage. (Published in 2011 by Moody Publishers.)*



Author Note

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End Notes:

- ¹ W. Bradford Wilcox and Elizabeth Marquardt, "When Marriage Disappears: The New Middle America," *The State of our Unions*, 2010, an annual report on marriage in America from the National Marriage Project, (Charlotte, VA, University of Virginia, December 2010), p.76
- ² David Popenoe, *Cohabitation, Marriage and Wellbeing: A Cross National Perspective*, (Rutgers University, The National Marriage Project, 2008), p. 2.
- ³ William G. Axinn and Arland Thornton, "The Relationship Between Cohabitation and Divorce: Selectivity or Casual Influence?" *Demography*, 29 (1992) 357-374; Georgina Binstock and Arland Thornton, "Separations, Reconciliations, and Living Apart in Cohabiting and Marital Unions," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65 (2003): 432-443.
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- ⁵ Scott M. Stanley and Galena K. Rhoades, "Sliding vs. Deciding: Understanding a Mystery," *Family Focus*, a newsletter of the National Council on Family Relations, Issue FF42, (Summer 2009) p. 1.
- ⁶ James Q. Wilson, *The Marriage Problem: How Our Culture Has Weakened Families*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2002) p. 39.
- ⁷ Jan E. Stets, "The Link Between Past and Present Intimate Relationships," *Journal of Family Issues*, 14 (1993): 236-260.
- ⁸ Arland Thornton, William G. Axinn and Yu Xie, *Marriage and Cohabitation*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 82.
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- ¹¹ Judith Treas and Deirdre Giesen, "Sexual Fidelity Among Married and Cohabiting Americans," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62 (2000): 48-60; Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*, (New York:Doubleday, 2000), p. 93
- ¹² Waite and Gallagher, 2000, pp. 63-64; Andrew J. Cherlin, *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and Family in America Today*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009) p. 100.
- ¹³ Robert Coombs, "Marital Status and Personal Well-Being: A Literature Review," *Family Relations*, 40 (1991) 97-102.
- ¹⁴ Chris M. Wilson and Andrew J. Oswald, "How Does Marriage Affect Physical and Psychological Health? A Survey of the Longitudinal Evidence," Institute for the Study of Labor Study Paper 1619, (Bonn, Germany: *Institute for the Study of Labor*, Institute of Labor Study Paper, May 2005), p. 1; Bruce Wydick, "Grandma Was Right: Why Cohabitation Undermines Relational Satisfaction, But Is Increasing Anyway," *Kyklos*, 60 (2007): 617-645.
- ¹⁵ Steven Stack and J. Ross Eshleman, "Marital Status and Happiness: A 17-Nation Study," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 60 (1998): 527-536.
- ¹⁶ Pamela Smock, et al., "Heterosexual Cohabitation in the United States: Motives for Living Together Among Young Men and Women," *Research Report 06-606*, Population Studies Center (University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, 2006), p. 14.
- ¹⁷ Galena K. Rhoades, Scott M. Stanley, Howard J. Markman, "A Longitudinal Investigation of Commitment Dynamics in Cohabiting Relationships," *Journal of Family Issues* 33, (2012) p. 22.
- ¹⁸ Smock, et al., 2006, p. 5; Susan L. Brown, "Union Transitions Among Cohabitors: The Significance of Relationship Assessments and Expectations," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62 (2000): 833-846.
- ¹⁹ Teresa Ciabattari, "Cohabitation and Housework: The Effects of Marital Intentions," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66 (2004): 118-125.



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