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<http://cloud9.norc.uchicago.edu/dlib/t-25.htm>.

9. Kaiser Family Foundation. National Survey of Adolescents and Young Adults: Sexual Health Knowledge, Attitudes and Experiences, 15 (May 2003) available at [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org), (Last visited August 4, 2003); Quoted by Helen Alvaré, "Saying 'Yes' Before Saying 'I Do': Premarital Sex and Cohabitation as a Piece of the Divorce Puzzle," p. 21, paper to be published in the Journal of the University of Notre Dame School of Law. "Married-Couple and Unmarried-Partner Households: 2000," Census 2000 Special Reports, Feb. 2003.

10. J. Fields and L. M. Casper. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: March 2000." Current Population Reports, P20-537, p. 12. Quoted by Alvaré, p. 23.

11. For a summary of classic research and links to studies, see the web sites of the Heritage Foundation, [www.heritage.org](http://www.heritage.org); Family Research Council, [www.frc.org](http://www.frc.org); The National Marriage Project, <http://marriage.rutgers.edu>.

12. R. Rector et al., Sexually Active Teenagers are More Likely to Be Depressed and to Attempt Suicide. A Report from the Heritage Center for Data Analysis, June 2002.

13. Id.

14. Id., citing National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, June 2000.

15. B. Whitehead and D. Popenoe. The State of Our Unions, Why Men Won't Commit. Exploring Young Men's Attitudes About Sex, Dating and Marriage. The National Marriage Project, Rutgers University, 2002. Available from:  
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16. See note 6, Alvaré, p. 25.

[excerpted from "Sex: What Do Women (and Men) Really Want?" by Theresa Notaré, M.A., 2004, [usccb.org](http://usccb.org)]

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Pamphlet 497

## **Sex: What Do Women (and Men) Really Want?**

Today it is estimated that half of newly married couples cohabited prior to marriage. In the 2000 Census, there were 5.5 million cohabiting unmarried couples (up from 3.2 million in 1990).<sup>10</sup>

Given these facts, are people happier?

Does this behavior aid growth in emotional or sexual maturity?

Does it make people more generous or better able to persevere in difficult situations?

What impact does this behavior have on marriage and family life?

Are those who have multiple sexual partners better able to form lasting relationships?

Better prepared to put the needs of loved ones above their own desires?

Research provides answers to many of these questions.<sup>11</sup>

Over 25 percent of sexually active teenage girls 14-17 report being depressed all, most or "a lot" of the time, a rate of depression more than three times that of teenage girls who are not sexually active (7.7 percent).<sup>12</sup>

Sexually active boys 14-17 report being depressed all, most or a lot of the time at a

rate 2 times greater than boys who are not sexually active (8.3 percent vs. 3.4 percent).

"A full 14.3 percent of girls who are sexually active report having attempted suicide [in the past 12 months]. By contrast, only 5.1 percent of sexually inactive girls have attempted suicide."<sup>13</sup>

The contrast between sexually active boys (6.0 percent of whom attempted suicide in the past 12 months) and boys who were not sexually active (0.7 percent) is even greater – almost 8 times higher.

Do teens regret having become sexually active? 72% of sexually active girls and 55% of sexually active boys said they wished they had waited longer before starting to be sexually active.<sup>14</sup>

And a 2002 study on the attitude of young men toward marriage is telling. Included in the top ten reported reasons why men won't commit to marriage are: "they can get sex without marriage," "they fear that marriage will require too many changes and compromises," "they want a house before they get a wife," and "they want to enjoy single life as long as they can."<sup>15</sup> Such reasons lend support to the belief that non-marital sexual activity fosters immaturity and materialism.

Current sociological research overwhelmingly demonstrates "strong correlations between the practices of premarital sex and/or cohabitation and

divorce."<sup>16</sup> Some of the more prominent studies:

- As early as 1974 the correlation between premarital sex and divorce was known. Robert Athanasiou and Richard Sarkin. "Premarital sexual behavior and postmarital adjustment," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 3 (May 1974).

- A 1991 study suggested a "relatively strong positive relationship between premarital sex and divorce." Joan Kahn and Kathryn London. "Premarital Sex and the Risk of Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53 (1991):845-55.

- In May 2003, a study concluded that women who had their first sexual experience before marriage with partners other than the man they eventually marry, are about 34% more likely to experience divorce than women who did not. This increased risk is not present with women whose only premarital sex involved the man they married. This study also notes that cohabitation is considered to be "one of the most robust predictors of marital dissolution that has appeared in the literature." Jay Teachmen. "Premarital Sex, Premarital Cohabitation, and the Risk of Subsequent Marital Dissolution Among Women," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65 (May 2003).

Bottom line? It seems safe to say that sex outside of marriage causes emotional harm and also seems to harm marriage and the family. Ultimately, for the emotional health

of the individual, the family and society itself, only married couples should engage in sexual intercourse...

#### Endnotes

1. M. Weiss and K. Sheehy, "Lethal Birth Control," *New York Post* online edition, April 7, 2004. Available at: <http://www.nypost.com/news/regionalnews/22366.htm> (Last visited April 13, 2004).

2. See M.F. Goldsmith. "Silent Epidemic of Social Disease Makes STD Experts Raise Their Voices." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 26 (1989):3509-3510.

3. W. Cates, American Social Health Association Panel. "Estimates of the incidence and prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases in the United States," *Sexually Transmitted Diseases* 26 (1999): 52-57.

4. E. Laumann et al. *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

5. N. Munoz, International Agency for Research on Cancer. "Human papilloma virus and cancer: the epidemiological evidence," *Journal of Clinical Virology* 2000, Oct. 1; 19 (1-2); 1-5.

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7. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services. Workshop Summary – Scientific Evidence on Condom Effectiveness for Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Prevention, July 20, 2001. Available at: [www.niaid.nih.gov/dmid/stds/condomreport.pdf](http://www.niaid.nih.gov/dmid/stds/condomreport.pdf).

8. T. Smith, National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, *American Sexual Behavior: Trends, Socio-Demographic Differences, and Risk*