

1 Women are more eager to marry than men.

2 Men are threatened by women who are their intellectual and occupational equals, preferring to be with much younger, less accomplished women.

3 There are more long-term marriages today than in the past.

4 Americans have become much more tolerant of all sexual activity.

5 The growth in the number of couples living together and even having children without formal marriage ceremonies or licenses reflects a sharp break with centuries-old tradition.

6 Educated married women are increasingly "opting out" of work to stay home with their children.

7 Men and women who hold nontraditional views about gender roles are less likely to marry and more likely to divorce than those with traditional values.

8 Divorce rates in the 1950's were lower than at any other time in the 20th century.

9 Throughout history, philosophers and theologians have always believed that strong marital commitments form the foundation of a virtuous society.

10 American women have more positive attitudes toward marriage than Japanese women do.

11 Divorce has always been a disaster for women and children.

12 The preferred form of marriage through the ages has been between one man and one woman.

13 Born-again Christians are just as likely to divorce as more secular Americans.

ANSWER KEY

- 1. FALSE.** From 1970 to the late 1990's, men's attitudes toward marriage became more favorable, while women's became less so. By the end of the century, more men than women said that marriage was their ideal lifestyle. And on average, men become more content with their marriages over time, while women grow less so. A majority of divorced men and women report that the wife was the one who wanted out of the marriage. A recent study of divorces that occurred after age 40 found that wives initiated two-thirds of them.
- 2. FALSE.** The difference in the ages of men and women at first marriage has been narrowing for the past 80 years and is now at a historic low. By the end of the 1990's, 39 percent of women age 35 to 44 lived with younger men. Men still rate youth and good looks higher than women do when looking for a mate, but those criteria no longer outweigh all others. Men are much more likely now to seek a mate who has the same level of education and similar earnings potential. College-educated women are more likely to marry and less likely to divorce than women with less education.
- 3. TRUE.** Although divorce rates have risen, death rates have fallen even more steeply, so that more couples will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversaries now than at any time in the past. Furthermore, the divorce rate reached its height more than 25 years ago. It has fallen by more than 25 percent since 1981.
- 4. FALSE.** Americans are now more tolerant of consenting sexual relations between unmarried adults than in the past. But surveys show that disapproval of adultery, sexual coercion, rape and sex with minors has increased over the past 30 years and is now at a historic high. In 1889, a girl could legally consent to sex at 10, 11 or 12 in half the states, and in Delaware the age of consent was 7. There were many more prostitutes per capita in late 19th century America than there are today — resulting in a high incidence of venereal disease among respectably married women infected by their husbands.
- 5. FALSE.** For the first thousand years of its existence, the church held that a marriage was valid if a couple claimed they had exchanged words of consent — even if there were no witnesses and no priest to officiate. Not until 1754 did England require issuance of a license for a marriage to be valid. Informal marriage and cohabitation were so common in early 19th-century America that one judge estimated that one-third of all children were born to couples who were not legally married.
- 6. FALSE.** The likelihood that college-educated women will drop out of the labor force because of having children declined by half from 1984 to 2004. And among all mothers with children under 6, the most highly educated are the least likely to leave their jobs, with that likelihood declining with each level of educational attainment.
- 7. TRICK QUESTION.** Women with nontraditional values are indeed more likely to divorce than women with traditional views, but they are also more likely to get married in the first place. As for men, those with traditional values about gender are more likely to marry than nontraditional men, but they are also more likely to divorce. We don't precisely know why this discrepancy exists, but it probably has something to do with the fact that women's views on gender are changing more rapidly than men's.
- 8. FALSE.** Aside from a huge spike in divorce immediately after World War II, divorce rates in the 1950's were higher than in any previous decade aside from the Depression, and almost one in three marriages formed in the 1950's eventually ended in divorce. Divorce rates rose steadily from the 1890's through the 1960's (with a dip in the Depression and a spike after World War II), soared in the 1970's, and have fallen since 1981. Marriage rates, however, have also fallen significantly in the past 25 years.
- 9. FALSE.** Ancient Roman philosophers and medieval theologians thought that loving your spouse too much was a form of "adultery," a betrayal of one's obligations to country or God. The ancient Greeks held that the purest form of love was between two men. In China, Confucian philosophers ranked the relationship between husband and wife as second from the bottom on their list of the most important family ties, with the father-oldest son relationship topping the list. Early Christians thought marriage was inescapably tainted by the presence of sex. According to the medieval church, virgins ranked highest in godliness, widows were second and wives a distant third.
- 10. TRUE.** In 2001 schoolgirls around the world were asked whether they agreed with the statement that everyone needed to marry. Three-quarters of American schoolgirls agreed. But in Japan, 88 percent of schoolgirls disagreed.
- 11. FALSE.** Divorce in modern America often does cause a sharp drop in the economic standard of living for women and children. But states that legalized no-fault divorce experienced an average 20 percent decline in suicide rates among married women over the following five years. And a recent study suggests that while divorce worsens the emotional well-being of 55 percent to 60 percent of children, it improves the well-being of 40 percent to 45 percent.
- 12. FALSE.** The form of marriage that has been approved by more societies than any other through the ages has been polygamy — one man and many women. That family form is the one mentioned most often in the first five books of the Bible. In some societies, one woman could marry several men. In others, two families could forge an alliance by marrying off a son or daughter to the "ghost" of the other family's dead child. For most of history, the main impetus for marriage was getting in-laws and managing property, not love or sex.
- 13. TRUE.** Thirty-five percent of born-again Christians in this country have divorced, almost the same as the 37 percent of atheists and agnostics who have divorced — and 23 percent of born-again Christians have divorced twice. Among Pentecostals, the divorce rate is more than 40 percent. The region with the highest divorce rate is the Bible Belt.