Marriage Reduces Child Poverty

**Issue:** Intact, married families with a mother and father are essential to stimulating the upward mobility of children out of economic poverty. Marriage both prevents and alleviates child poverty rates.

**Marriage Decreases Poverty**
- A child’s likelihood of living in poverty is reduced by 82 percent if he is raised in a married two-parent family.  
- Intact married families have the largest annual income of all family structures with children under 18.

**Marriage Demographics**
- Marriage is associated with lower rates of poverty, independent of race. Consider:
  - The poverty rate for white married-couple families was almost seven times lower than for white non-married families.
  - The poverty rate for black married-couple families was five times lower than for black non-married families.
  - The poverty rate for black married-couple families was three times lower than for white non-married families.

**Marriage Promotes Child Well-Being**
- Married couples are less likely to receive welfare, and children raised in a home headed by their married biological mother and father are dramatically less likely to end up on welfare as adults.
- Children raised in single-mother families, intact cohabiting families, and (biological father or mother) cohabiting stepfamilies are significantly more likely than children from married families to receive most forms of welfare, including TANF, food stamps, and Medicaid.
- Family intactness in a geographic area negatively influences the fraction of minors receiving public healthcare and positively influences the fraction of minors receiving private healthcare within that area.

**Conclusion:** The intact, married family delivers fundamental benefits to all of its members. MARRI research available online shows that marriage is a natural remedy to the child poverty crisis.
1 “Married two-parent families,” “married-couple families,” and similar terms within this document all refer to families in which there is a married mother and father present. Note, according to the US Census Bureau, “Family households and married-couple families do not include same-sex married couples even if the marriage was performed in a state issuing marriage certificates for same-sex couples.”


7 An “intact cohabiting family” consists of a biological father and mother who reside together in a household with the child(ren), but are not legally married.


10 http://marri.us/home For example, “164 Reasons to Marry”, “The Effects of Divorce on Children”, and “U.S. Social Policy Dependence on the Family Derived from the Index of Belonging”