

LEGAL UPDATE

Statistics Netherlands research figures – Marriage and having a child reduces the likelihood of divorce or separation

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A recent study by Statistics Netherlands entitled '*Marriage, having children and divorce by level of education*' shows a correlation between three important decisions for couples: whether or not to marry, whether or not to start a family and whether to break off the relationship or stay together. The research focused on whether the relationship between them differs according to level of education.

The research shows that the likelihood of unmarried couples getting married is reduced when they have their first child. The level of education does not make any difference. Conversely, couples are more likely to have a child when they decide to get married. The latter can be explained because for many couples it is a deliberate choice: for example, they can avoid the administrative 'red tape' of formalising paternity by getting married before the child is born. It also appears that people with a low and medium level of education have an illegitimate child more often than average.

The results also show that when the level of education is higher, the chance of a divorce is lower. Cohabiting childless couples have the highest chance of splitting up. In addition, it appears that the risk of breaking off the relationship among people with a low and medium level of education who are married but do not (yet) have children is approximately as high as for highly educated couples who are not (yet) married and have not (yet) had children.

Statistics Netherlands concludes that couples with a low and medium level of education are more inclined to separate, regardless of whether or not they were married. A key conclusion is that both marriage and having a child reduces the likelihood of divorce, especially among the highly educated. The research shows that investing in the relationship by getting married or having a child reduces the risk of divorce. According to the researchers, marriage and family stability increasingly appear to be a privilege or status symbol for the highly educated in the Netherlands.

You can read the full Statistics Netherlands study [here](#).

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