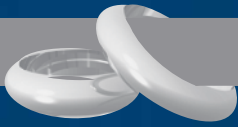


# MARRIAGE



in CENTRAL INDIANA

**2004 Baseline Survey  
on Marriage & Divorce  
in the Indianapolis MSA\***

\* The Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area includes: Boone, Brown, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Marion, Morgan, Putnam, and Shelby Counties

In 2003, former Indiana Lt. Governor John Mutz and his wife Carolyn launched an effort to determine what was being done in Central Indiana to strengthen the marriages and families of local residents. Motivated by the discovery of various projects and programs being conducted in a handful of communities around the United States, Lt. Gov. and Mrs. Mutz enlisted the help of the Central Indiana Community Foundation (CICF) to convene an advisory group to explore both the current state of marital health and existing marriage and family strengthening initiatives in the Indianapolis area. This group, consisting of local experts, mental health practitioners, community service and faith-based leaders, and policy researchers, became known as *The Central Indiana Healthy Marriage Initiative (CIHMI)*.

The CIHMI determined that the first order of business would be to conduct the first-ever baseline survey of attitudes and behavior of Indianapolis-area residents related to marriage, divorce and family formation. The need to establish an accurate picture of marital health in Central Indiana was considered paramount, although painting that picture would be hindered by the fact that Indiana is one of only four states in the nation that do not track or publish cumulative divorce records as part of their Vital Health Statistics Report. As a consequence, the CIHMI sought and received permission to utilize the survey instrument that had been created for identical purposes by a committee of nationally recognized experts in the field and used in state-funded research projects in Oklahoma and Utah.

The CIHMI was soon made aware of a second group of marriage experts and community and faith-based leaders who had joined to form the *Indiana Community Healthy Marriage and Family Coalition (ICHMFC)*. The ICHMFC, under the leadership of Dr. Ruth Lambert, was also strongly motivated by the need to strengthen marriages and families within Indiana. Furthermore, the ICHMFC launched an extensive effort to form a broad coalition of organizations and leaders from the African American community in order to develop marriage and family strengthening initiatives within the African American population. Additionally, the ICHMFC formed a partnership with the Administration for Children and Families, a sub-agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which had launched a marriage study program known as the *Healthy Marriage Initiative*. The mission of this national program would resonate with the local efforts being pursued by CIHMI and ICHMFC: To help couples, who have chosen marriage for themselves, gain greater access to marriage education services, on a voluntary basis, where they can acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain a healthy marriage.

Joining forces, the two Indiana-based marriage coalitions worked to approve the final survey document. In addition to the general survey results desired for the Indianapolis MSA, it was further agreed that pollsters would over-sample within the African American population in order to provide definitive data for that subset. Under the direction of Dr. Tim Gardner, and in cooperation with the Sagamore Institute for Policy Research (SIPR), the Indiana University Public Opinion Laboratory was contracted to conduct the survey and compile data results. Polling was carried out in December 2003 and January 2004. Information on the questionnaire, survey sample, sample design, and all other relevant research data can be found in the full report, available at SIPR's website, [www.sipr.org](http://www.sipr.org). As its name suggests, this executive summary represents only a fraction, or summary, of that full report.



## PROJECT RATIONALE

There is a growing body of indisputable research that highlights both the social and economic importance of strong marriages and families. Economic studies have linked various negative social indicators, including high divorce rates, to the poorly performing economy of a community. Social health research has demonstrated the incontrovertible link between a child's wellbeing and the presence of an intact marriage between the child's mother and father, although there are noteworthy (and praiseworthy) exceptions. Indeed, all single parents fight against long odds, and many do a remarkable job playing two roles for their children.

Further studies have proven that both men and women experience multiple positive benefits, including increased financial vigor and vastly improved mental and physical health, when they are a partner in a healthy marriage. Conversely, the experience of marital dissolution often results in increased health problems, loss of economic stability and status, and decreased productivity in the workplace. These negative effects are compounded in the lives and wellbeing of children.

It is important to note that, in cases of domestic violence, the safety of all victims, especially the children, is paramount. The research demonstrating the importance of healthy marriages is in no way meant to ignore, promote, or otherwise condone family and marital abuse, nor encourage victims to remain in violent situations. Neither does the research support or promote marriage among those who, for a variety of circumstances, do not wish to take on the commitment of creating a healthy marriage.

In essence, healthy marriage initiatives are about one thing: *helping those who choose marriage to stay married*. Again, definitive research has confirmed that the skills and attitudes necessary to create and sustain a healthy marriage are *learnable*. It is the aim of the Central Indiana Healthy Marriage Initiative—and the hope of its designers—that through a clear understanding of current beliefs and practices about marriage and divorce among Central Indiana residents, true progress can be made toward creating healthy and lasting marriages and families in our community.

### Central Indiana values marriage and is a marrying place.

- 78% of Central Hoosiers have been married at least once.
- 55% of Central Indiana residents are currently married.
- The average length of current marriages is 19 years.
- 86% of single, never married adults hope to marry someday.
- 98% of married respondents describe their marriage as “very happy” or “pretty happy.”
- 94% of married Central Hoosiers say their relationship with their mate is more important to them than anything else.



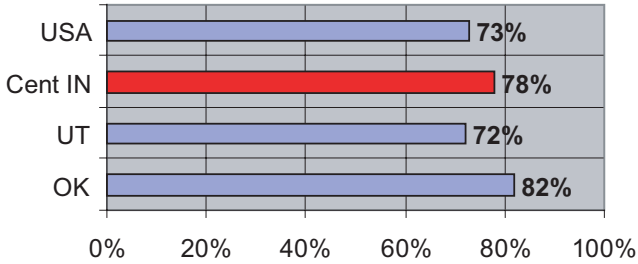
### Central Indiana is a divorcing place.

- 29% of all adults have divorced at least once (US=21, OK=32).  
\*Similar studies were conducted in Oklahoma (OK) and Utah (UT). Where appropriate, comparison data is given.
- 14.5% currently list their marital status as divorced, which is the highest when compared to 13 comparable US cities.
- Residents who married for the first time at age 20 or younger are more likely to have been divorced at least once compared to other age categories.
- 15% of currently married Central Indiana residents have discussed divorce or separation with a close friend.
- However, a lower percentage of currently married Central Indiana residents have thought about divorce; 30% of respondents said that divorce has crossed their mind, compared to 42% nationally (OK=56%; UT=31%).
- Still, 43% stated that at some point they thought their marriage was in trouble, with 42% of those feelings occurring within the past year.

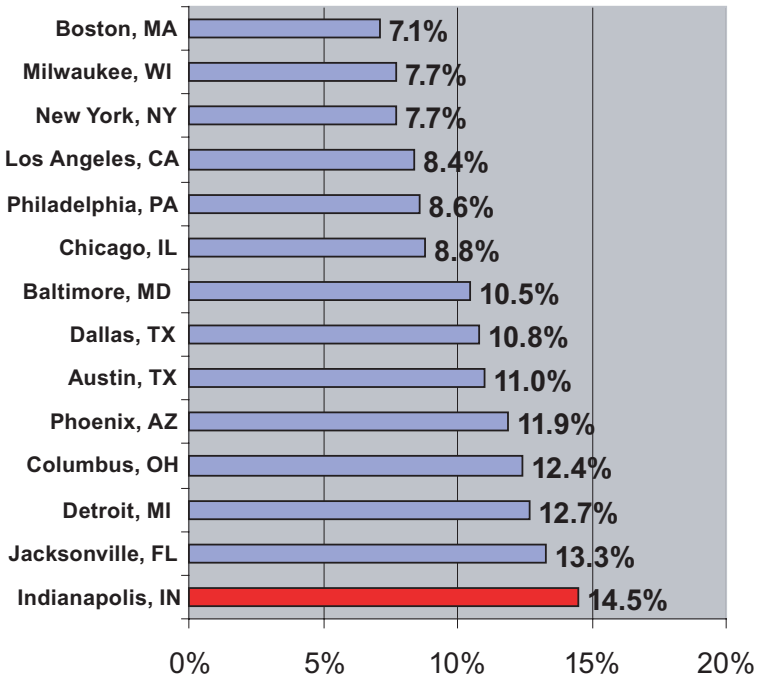
### Marital Status of Respondents Compared to All Indiana and U.S. Residents

Marital Status	Central Indiana Respondents	Indiana	United States
Married	55.2%	57.4%	53.6%
Widowed	6.5%	16.1%	6.3%
Divorced	14.5%	16.7%	9.5%
Separated	2.2%	4.1%	2.1%
Never married	21.5%	24.3%	28.5%

## MARRIED at least once.



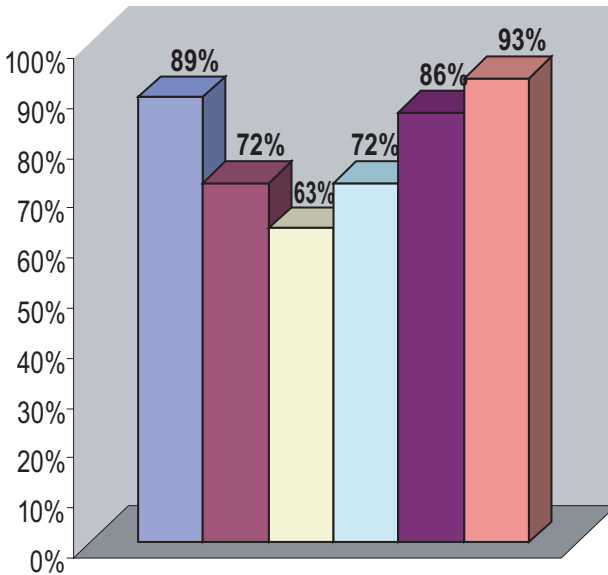
## Currently Divorced Residents



### Highlights:

- A vast majority of residents believe that divorce is a serious national problem.
- Hoosiers clearly believe in the sanctity and importance of marriage.
- A majority of respondents agree that divorce is harmful to society.
- A majority agree that people who have children together should be married.
- Almost 9 out of 10 believe too many rush into marriage and that young people place too much emphasis on “happiness.”

### Attitudes about Marriage & Divorce



#### Respondents who believe that...

- Divorce is a "serious" or "somewhat serious" national problem
- Longer waiting periods before divorce would be beneficial
- People who "no longer love each other" should stay together if they have children
- Divorce is bad, but a difficult marriage is worse
- Too many couples "rush" into marriage
- Young couples place too much emphasis on "happiness"



**The following questions were asked to all survey respondents.**

	<b>In marriage you can count on your partner being there for you more than you can when are living with someone.</b>	<b>These days, couples who live together outside of marriage get all the benefits of marriage without the legal status.</b>
Strongly Agree	22%	3%
Agree	48%	28%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	9%	10%
Disagree	18%	50%
Strongly Disagree	1%	6%
Don't know/didn't answer	2%	3%

	<b>When married people realize they no longer love each other, they should get a divorce, even if they have children.</b>	<b>When there are children in the family, parents should stay married even if they do not get along.</b>
Strongly Agree	6%	5%
Agree	20%	20%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	11%	12%
Disagree	43%	48%
Strongly Disagree	19%	13%
Don't know/didn't answer	1%	2%

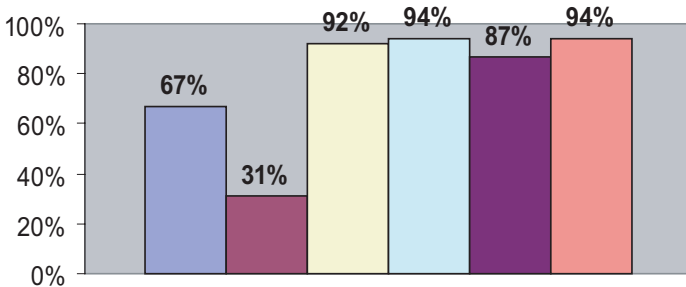
	<b>Society would be better off if divorces were hard to get.</b>	<b>Long waiting periods to get a divorce give people time to get over their anger, work out their problems, and reconcile.</b>
Strongly Agree	17%	14%
Agree	45%	57%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	8%	8%
Disagree	24%	17%
Strongly Disagree	5%	2%
Don't know/didn't answer	1%	2%



### Highlights:

- 98% of married respondents rate their marriage as “very” or “pretty happy.”
- 32% of married couples had been on a date in the week prior to the survey.
- Interestingly, 37% of those who said divorce or separation has crossed their mind rated their marriage as “very happy.”
- 93% of those who have thought about divorce or separation said they are glad they are still with their spouse.
- 87% of Central Indiana’s married residents report that, all in all, they are “completely satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their marriages.

## How would you rate the quality of your current marriage?



My marriage is VERY happy.

My marriage is PRETTY happy.

I want to stay married to my partner in the future.

My marriage is more important to me than anything.

My spouse and I regularly have great conversations where we talk as good friends.

I think of my spouse and I more as "us/we" than "me" and "him/her."



## Insight:

*Married respondents were asked the questions below in order to identify certain beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are predictors of marital health and longevity. Multiple validated research studies have demonstrated that the frequent presence of the items in question are reliable indicators of pending marital dissolution. However, it must be noted that there is no fool-proof or absolute predictor of divorce.*

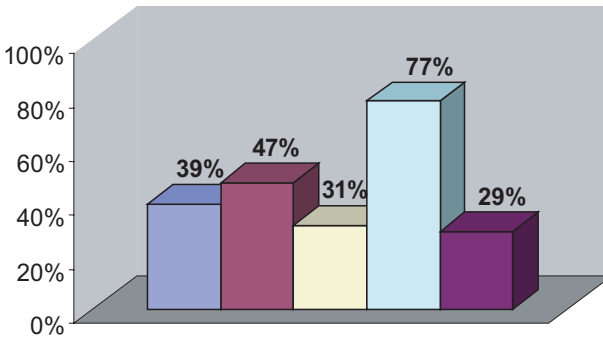
	Never or Almost Never	Once in a while	Frequently
1. Little disagreements escalate into ugly arguments with accusations, criticism, name calling, or bringing up past hurts.	66%	31%	3%
2. My spouse criticizes or belittles my opinions, feelings, or desires.	78%	18%	4%
3. My spouse seems to view my words or actions more negatively than I mean them to be.	62%	30%	8%
4. When we argue, one of us withdraws...that is, does not want to talk about it anymore, or leaves the scene.	48%	41%	11%

Statement	Yes	No
Have you ever thought your marriage might be in trouble?	43%	57%
Has the thought of getting a divorce ever crossed your mind?	31%	69%
Have you discussed divorce or separation from your spouse with a close friend?	15%	85%
Have you or your spouse ever seriously suggested the idea of divorce?	13%	87%
Have you and your spouse ever talked about consulting an attorney regarding a possible divorce or separation?	7%	93%

### Highlights:

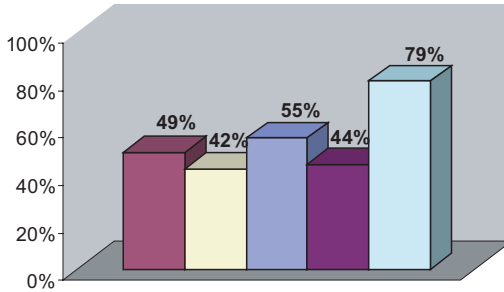
- Hoosiers are split on both the acceptability and benefits of living together prior to marriage.
- Age and Experiences were crucial determining factors:
  - ◇ Respondents under 25 years old were significantly more open to cohabitation.
  - ◇ Never-married respondents were more likely to think living together prior to marriage would increase the chances of a successful marriage than did those who were married or had been through a divorce.
  - ◇ Men were more likely than women to approve of cohabitation.
  - ◇ Married respondents who lived together prior to marriage are more likely to believe that cohabitation increases the likelihood of a good marriage than those who did not cohabit.

### Cohabitation Behaviors



- Respondents who lived with spouse prior to marriage.
- Divorced respondents who lived with their spouse prior to marriage.
- Married, never divorced respondents who lived with their spouse prior to marriage.
- Never married, currently in a relationship who feel that living together will improve chances of a successful marriage.

## Cohabitation Beliefs



- Believe that "romantic cohabitation" is "okay."
- Believe that "romantic cohabitation" is NOT "okay."
- MEN who believe that "romantic cohabitation" is okay.
- WOMEN who believe that "romantic cohabitation" is okay.
- Respondents under 25 years of age who believe "romantic cohabitation" is "okay."

***“Cohabitation before marriage is likely to improve chances for a good marriage.”***  
(married respondents ONLY)

	Lived with spouse prior to marriage	Did not live with spouse prior to marriage
Strongly agree	6.3%	0.9%
Agree	55.3%	13.6%
Neither agree/ disagree	14.9%	11.5%
Disagree	19.2%	56.8%
Strongly disagree	4.3%	17.2%

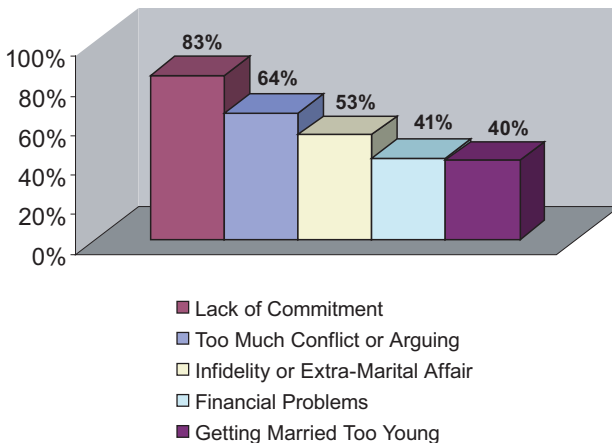
### Highlights:

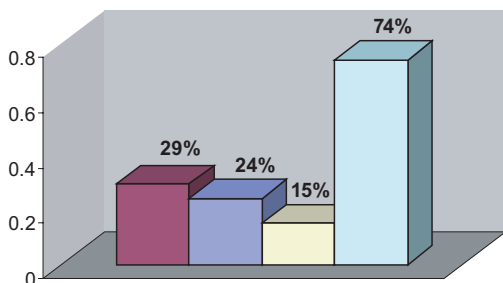
- Contrary to popular opinion, money and finances are NOT a major cause of divorce for a majority of Central Indiana divorcées.
- Divorced respondents listed “lack of commitment” as the overwhelming primary factor contributing to their divorce. This same result was found in both the Oklahoma and Utah studies.
- Central Indiana has a significantly higher number of adults who have been through a divorce (29%) than the US average (21%).
- Divorced respondents were given a list of 10 factors that may have contributed to their divorce and then asked to list “other” factors, if any. 38% gave responses; number one “other response” was “alcohol abuse.”
- According to US Census data, Indianapolis (MSA) has the highest percentage of currently divorced residents of the 25 largest cities in the U.S.
- Only about one-third of those who have been divorced wished they had worked harder to save their previous marriage, while 68% said they wished that their previous spouse had worked harder to save the marriage.

### Divorced respondents were asked:

*“What were the primary factors contributing to your divorce?”*

(More than one could be selected)





- Central Indiana residents who have gone through a divorce at some point in their lives.
- Married Central Indiana Hoosiers who have been previously divorced.
- Central Indiana residents who are currently divorced.
- Respondents who have been through a divorce that have children with their previous spouse.



*All respondents were asked their opinion on various factors that may or may not contribute to reasons for divorce. Those responses are below.*

Reason for Divorce	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	No at all important
1. With wives employed, pressure of work & family demands places a lot of stress on couples.	54.8%	35.3%	6.9%	3.1%
2. People have little respect for the spiritual importance of marriage.	54.5%	35.0%	7.0%	3.5%
3. Many husbands are unwilling to treat their wives as equals.	47.7%	35.9%	11.3%	5.1%
4. Changes in the law have made it easier for unhappy couples to get divorced.	41.7%	35.9%	13.1%	9.3%

### African-American Focus

*A major component of this research project was to gain insight into the beliefs and attitudes of Central Indiana's African-American community towards marriage and divorce. Thus, a major component of the research design was an oversample of African-American respondents. Standard testing protocol, including post-stratification weight calculations were used to ensure accuracy.*

### General Comparisons

- ◇ In many instances, the attitudes expressed by African Americans were stronger than the region as a whole when discussing the sanctity and strength of marriage.
- ◇ There were no significant differences between the African-American respondents and Central Indiana as a whole in terms of full-time employment.
- ◇ There were no significant differences between the African-American respondents and Central Indiana as a whole with regard to household makeup in areas related to household size and number of children.
- ◇ A higher proportion of African Americans (75%) reported annual household incomes under \$60,000 than did residents as a whole (54%).
- ◇ A higher percentage (28%) of single, never married African Americans report having children from a prior relationship outside of marriage (Central Indiana = 17%).
- ◇ A higher percentage (37%) of Central Indiana's African Americans are single and have never been married than Central Hoosier residents as a whole (22%).
- ◇ It seems that African-American respondents are more willing than the region as a whole to believe that in some cases, especially when parents no longer love each other and do not get along, divorce may be preferable to staying married.

### Marital Status of Central Indiana's African Americans

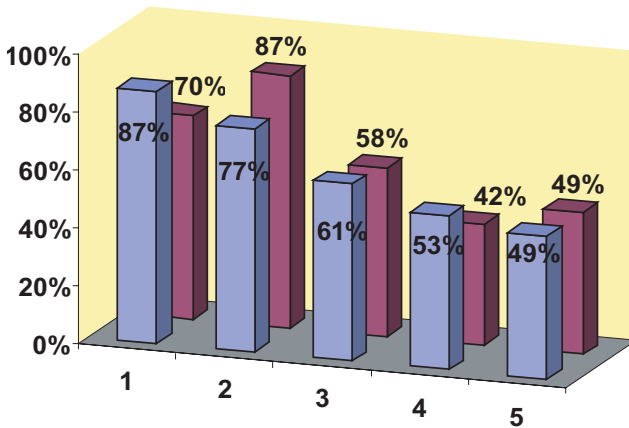
Marital Status	Central Indiana's African Americans	Central Indiana
Married	36%	55%
Widowed	4%	7%
Divorced	20%	15%
Separated	4%	2%
Never married	37%	22%

## AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CENTRAL INDIANA:

- 1) Believe that you can count on your partner more if you're married than if you are only cohabitating outside of marriage.
- 2) Respondents are "completely satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their marriage.
- 3) Believe that people who have children together ought to be married.
- 4) Do NOT believe that it is acceptable for a man and a woman who are not married to live together when they are romantically involved.
- 5) Do NOT believe that cohabitation before marriage is likely to increase the chances of a good marriage.



■ African Americans ■ Central Indiana

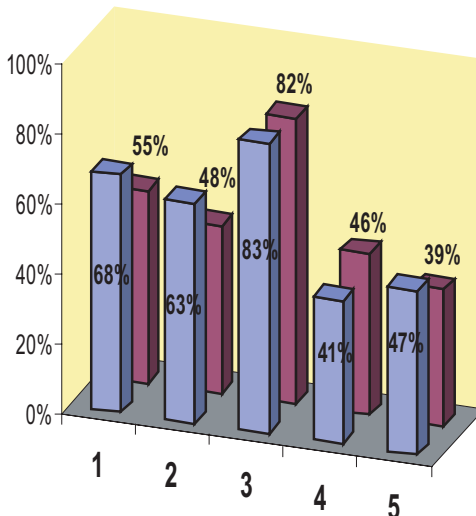




### AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CENTRAL INDIANA:

- 1) Believe one important reason for the high divorce rate is that couples have too little respect for the sanctity of marriage.
- 2) Believe that a very important reason for the high rate of divorce is that many husbands are unwilling to treat their wives as equals.
- 3) Married respondents who were married in a religious setting.
- 4) Married respondents who received any form of premarital education.
- 5) Rate of cohabitation prior to marriage with one's current spouse.

■ African Americans ■ Central Indiana



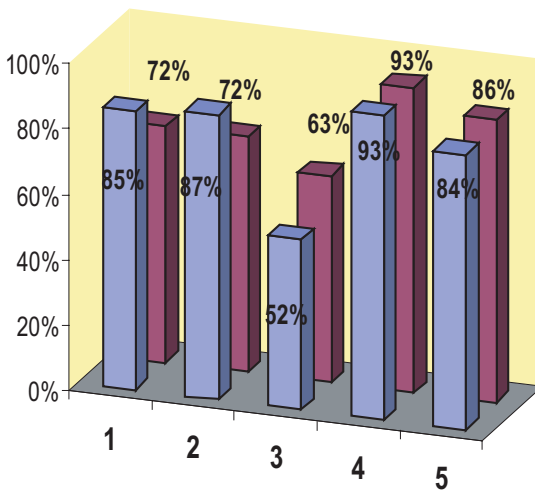


## AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN CENTRAL INDIANA

- 1) Believe that divorce is bad, but a difficult marriage is worse.
- 2) Believe that a longer waiting period before divorce will keep couples from making rash decisions and give them time to work out their problems and reconcile.
- 3) Believe that when married people no longer love each other, they should get a divorce even if they have children.
- 4) Believe that young couples place too much emphasis on happiness instead of on the hard work to make marriage last.
- 5) Believe that too many couples rush into marriage.

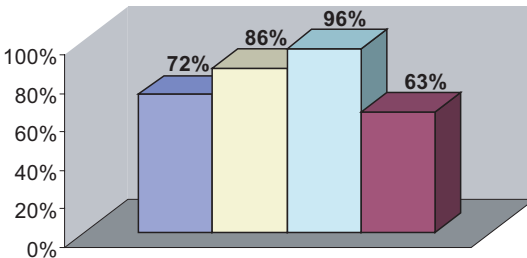


■ African Americans ■ Central Indiana



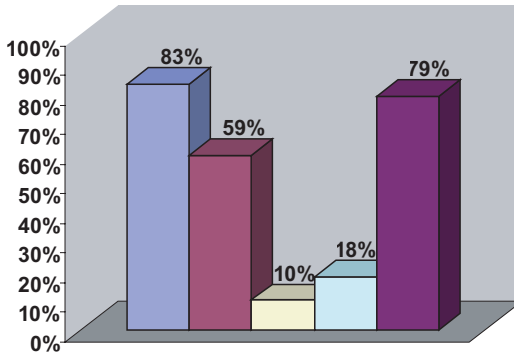
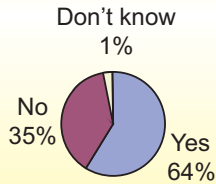
### Highlights:

- A vast majority of respondents were unaware of any governmental, community, or faith-based efforts to increase marital health and/or reduce divorces.
- More than 6 out of 10 surveyed thought society would be better off if divorces were harder to get.
- Over 95% thought it was a “good” or “very good” idea to require marriage counseling before granting a divorce to couples with children in the home.
- Almost two-thirds of Central Indiana residents are open to attending relationship education classes or workshops.
- Over 85% of respondents thought it was a “very” or “somewhat important” for couples to prepare for marriage through classes or counseling.
- A vast majority of Central Hoosier residents believe that a community wide initiative to support marriage and reduce divorces is a good idea.
- 8 out of 10 respondents would like to see Central Indiana have an organization dedicated to strengthening marriages and reducing divorces.



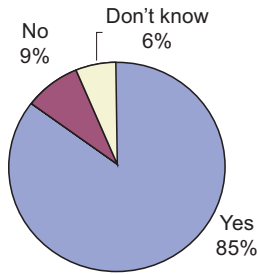
- A longer waiting period to get a divorce may give people time to get over their anger, work out their problems and reconcile.
- It is "very" or "somewhat important" for couples to prepare for marriage through educational classes, workshops or counseling.
- It is a "very good" or "good" idea to require marriage counseling or therapy before granting a divorce when there are children in the home.
- Society would be better off if divorces were harder to get.

**Would you consider using relationship education, such as workshops or classes, to strengthen your relationship?**

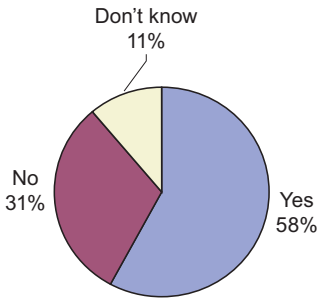


- Believe a community-wide initiative to promote marriage and reduce divorces is a "very good" or "good" idea.
- Respondents who were NOT aware of any efforts by religious organizations to strengthen marriages and reduce divorces.
- Hoosiers who were aware of governmental agencies sponsoring efforts to strengthen marriages and reduce divorces.
- Hoosiers who were aware of community organizations sponsoring efforts to strengthen marriages and reduce divorces.
- Central Indiana residents who would like to see Central Indiana have an organization dedicated to strengthening marriages and reducing divorces.

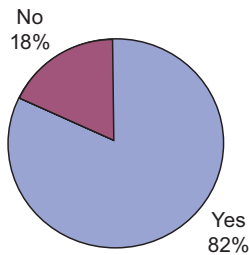
**Single respondents were asked:**  
*Would you like to marry someday?*



**Divorced respondents were asked:**  
*Would you like to remarry someday?*

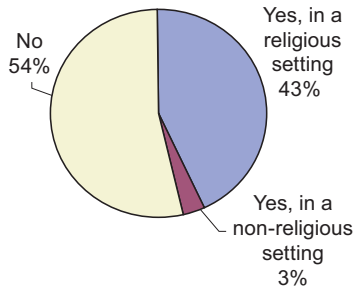


**Married respondents were asked:**  
*Were you married in a religious setting?*

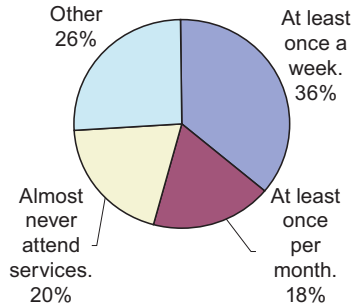




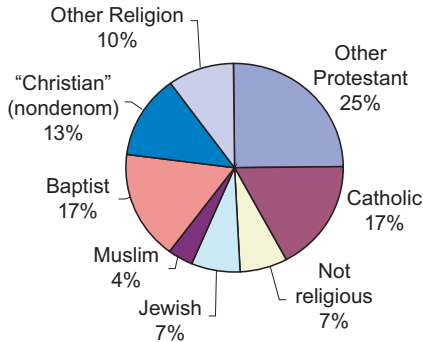
**Married respondents were asked:**  
*Did you have any premarital preparation?*



**All respondent were asked:**  
*How often do you attend religious services?*



**All respondents were asked:**  
*What is your religious preference?*



Dr. Lorraine Blackman  
*Indiana University School of Social  
Work*

Rosemary Dorsa  
*Executive Vice President, Central  
Indiana Community Foundation*

Dr. Tim A. Gardner  
*Associate Fellow, Sagamore Institute  
for Policy Research*

Chris Glancy  
*Vice President for Community  
Building, United Way of Central  
Indiana*

Jay Hein  
*President, Sagamore Institute for  
Policy Research*

The Honorable Jane Henegar  
*Deputy Mayor, Indianapolis*

Dr. Ruth Lambert  
*Executive Director of Indiana  
Community Healthy Marriage and  
Family Coalition*

Harry McFarland  
*Vice President for Programs, Central  
Indiana Community Foundation*

Dr. Wallace McLaughlin  
*Director, Fathers and Families  
Resource Center*

The Honorable John Mutz  
*Chairman of the Board, Lumina  
Foundation*

Mrs. Carolyn Mutz

Eddie Olson,  
*President, Family Service*

Brian Payne  
*President, Central Indiana  
Community Foundation*

Curt Smith  
*President, Indiana Family Institute*

Larry Smith,  
*Associate Director of Research  
Programs, Indiana University Center  
on Philanthropy*

Rev. Elaine Walters  
*Eastern Star Church*

Megan Wiles  
*President, Legacy Fund Community  
Foundation*

## *Special Thanks*

*Special thanks go to the Honorable John Mutz; Mrs. Carolyn Mutz; Harry McFarland, Vice President for Programs, Central Indiana Community Foundation; Jay Hein, President, Sagamore Institute for Policy Research; Jane Henegar, Deputy Mayor of Indianapolis; Dr. Ruth Lambert and the Indiana Community Healthy Marriage and Family Coalition; Dr. Christine Johnson and Dr. Scott Stanley, lead directors for the Oklahoma Baseline Survey; James Wolf and Andrew Hutcherson of the Indiana University Opinion Public Opinion Laboratory; Alan Dowd, Senior Fellow, Sagamore Institute for Policy Research; Larry Smith, Associate Director of Research Programs, Indiana University Center on Philanthropy, Julie Baumgardner of First Things First in Chattanooga, Tennessee; and the State of Oklahoma for use of its survey instrument.*



# Sagamore Institute

FOR POLICY RESEARCH

The Sagamore Institute for Policy Research (SIPR) is a nonprofit public policy research organization—a think tank. SIPR’s mission is to provide independent and innovative research to a world in progress. In keeping with this commitment to pragmatic independence and hands-on innovation, SIPR is headquartered in Indianapolis, enabling its research team to influence the Beltway and beyond, while making a difference in America’s Heartland. Donations to SIPR are tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. For more information on SIPR, visit [www.sipr.org](http://www.sipr.org) or call (317) 472-2050.

Sagamore Institute for Policy Research  
340 W. Michigan Street  
Canal Suite B Indianapolis, Indiana 46202

Phone: 317-472-2050

Fax: 317-472-2057

Email: [info@sipr.org](mailto:info@sipr.org)

For a copy of the full report, log on to:  
[www.sipr.org](http://www.sipr.org)

*This project was conducted under the direction of Dr. Tim Alan Gardner, Associate Fellow for the Sagamore Institute in Indianapolis, Indiana. Dr. Gardner is also the author of the Executive Summary and editor of the full report. James Wolf and Andrew Hutcherson of the Indiana University Opinion Public Opinion Laboratory are the primary authors of the full report.*



**Sagamore Institute**  
FOR POLICY RESEARCH

340 W. Michigan Street  
Canal Suite B  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46202