



The Marriage Divide: Why It Matters, Why It's Happening, & What We Can Do About It

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The Marriage Divide: What is Happening?

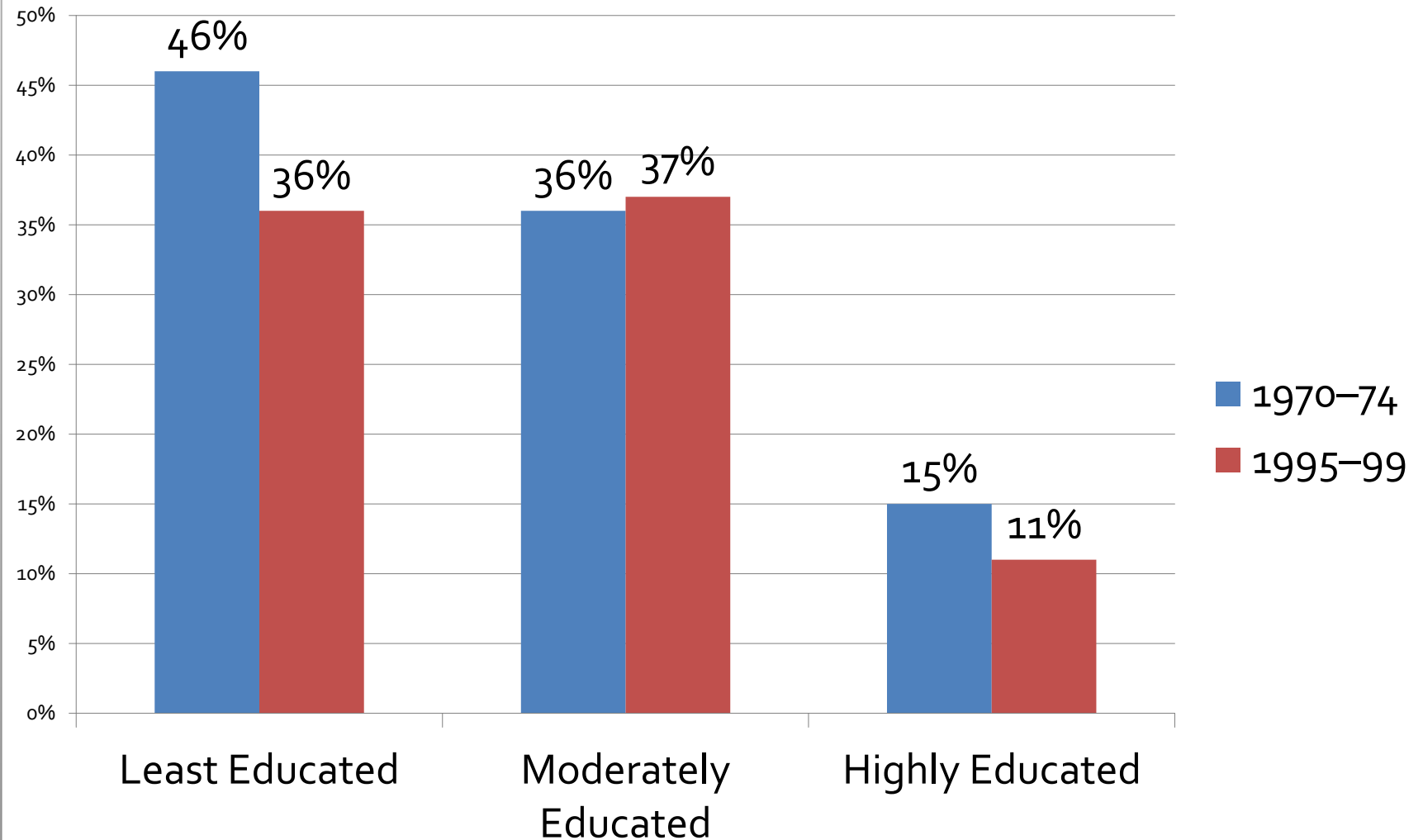
The Marriage Divide

- The United States is increasingly “separate and unequal” when it comes to marriage.
- Growing class divide in marriage:
 - College-educated are enjoying relatively high-quality, stable marriages;
 - But less-educated are less and less likely to form and sustain high-quality marriages, both for themselves and their children.



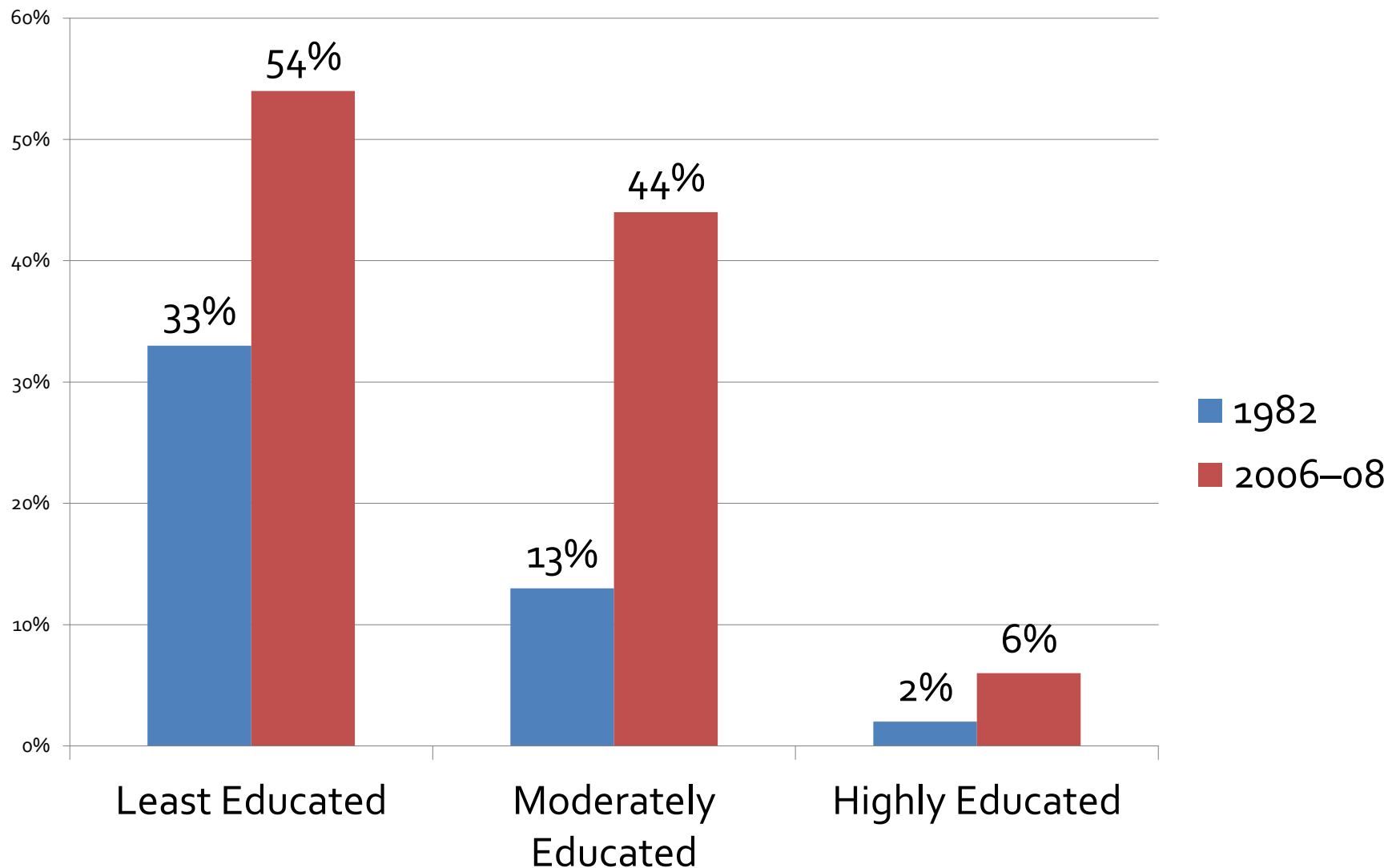
Divorce in First 10 Years

Source: NMP/IAV 2010



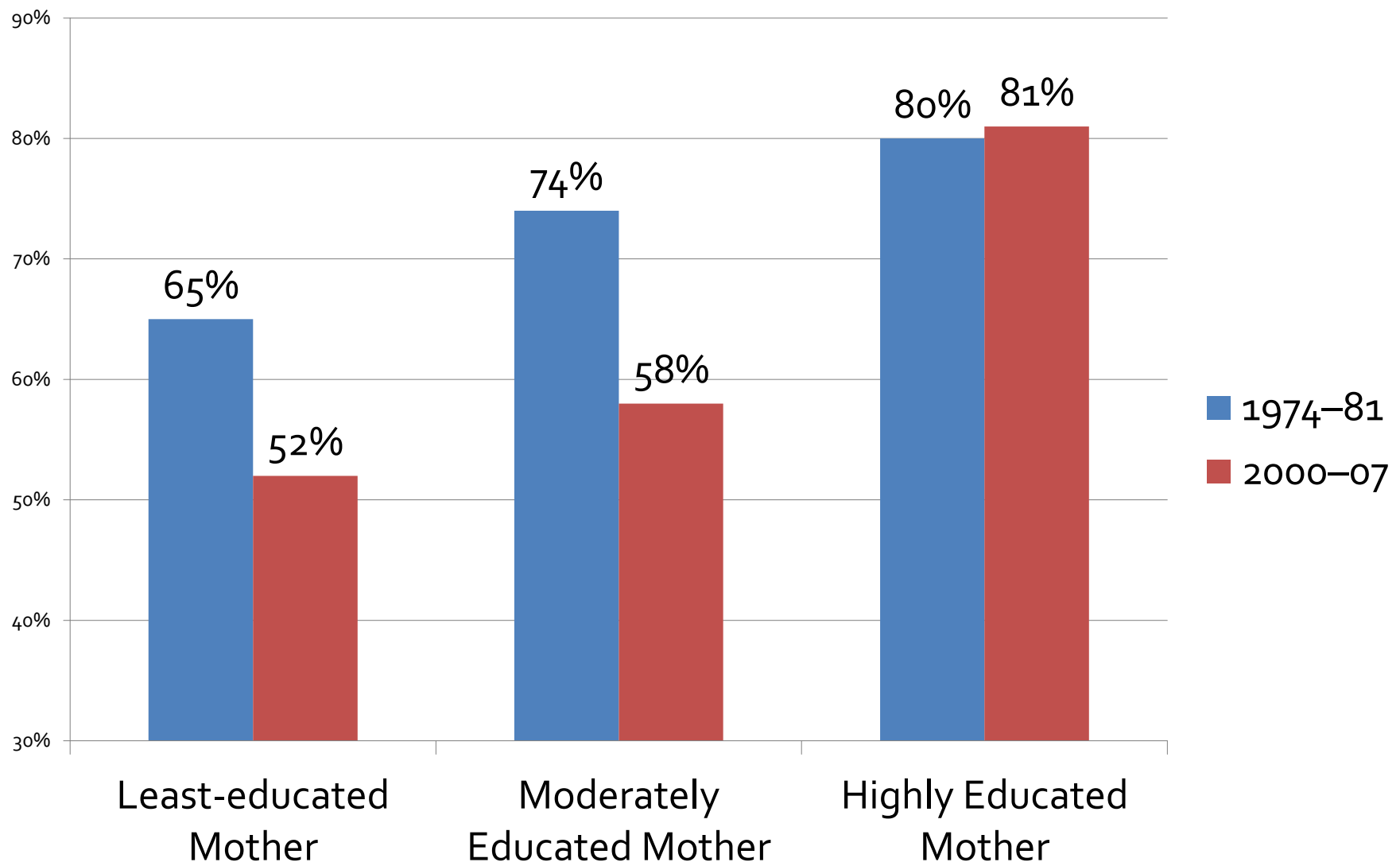
The Class Divide in Nonmarital Childbearing

Source: NMP/IAV 2010



Children with Both Parents at Age 14

Source: NMP/IAV 2010



The Marriage Divide: Why It Matters

The Micro Story.... For Children

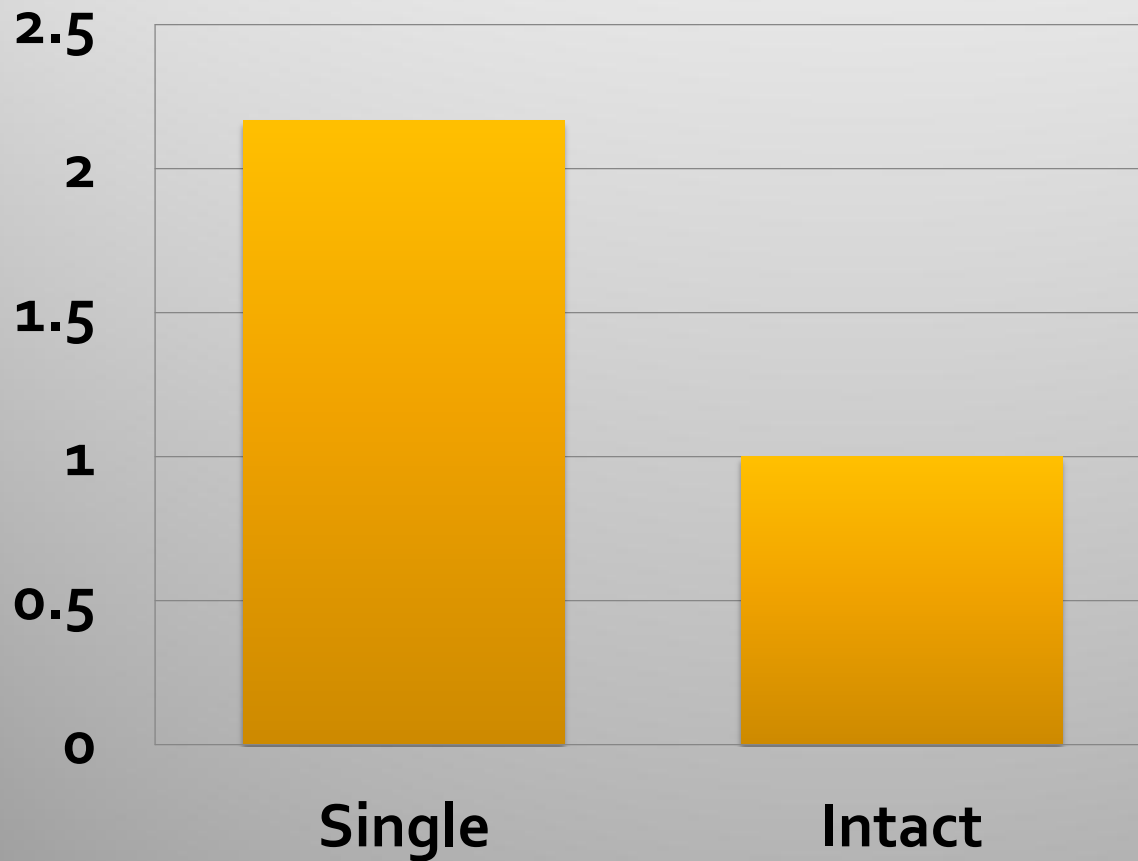


- Compared to children raised in single-parent families, children in intact, married homes are significantly more likely to:
 - Steer clear of events—e.g., premarital birth—that limit their future economic opportunities;
 - Acquire the human capital they need to flourish in today's labor market; and,
 - Work more hours & earn more money as young adults.

Incarceration



Odds of Incarceration by 30

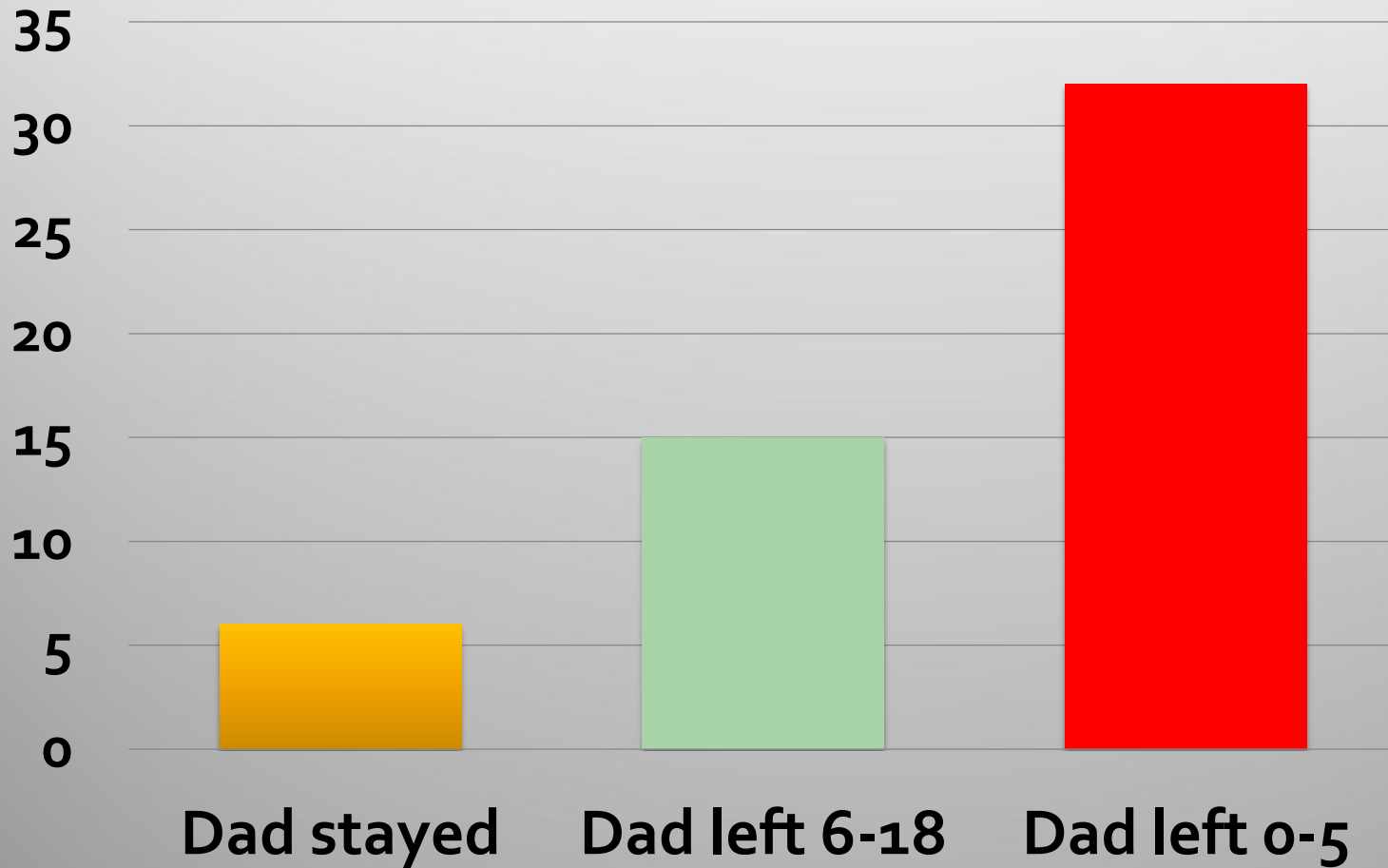


Source: Harper and McLanahan 2004

Teen Pregnancy



% Teenage Girls Pregnant

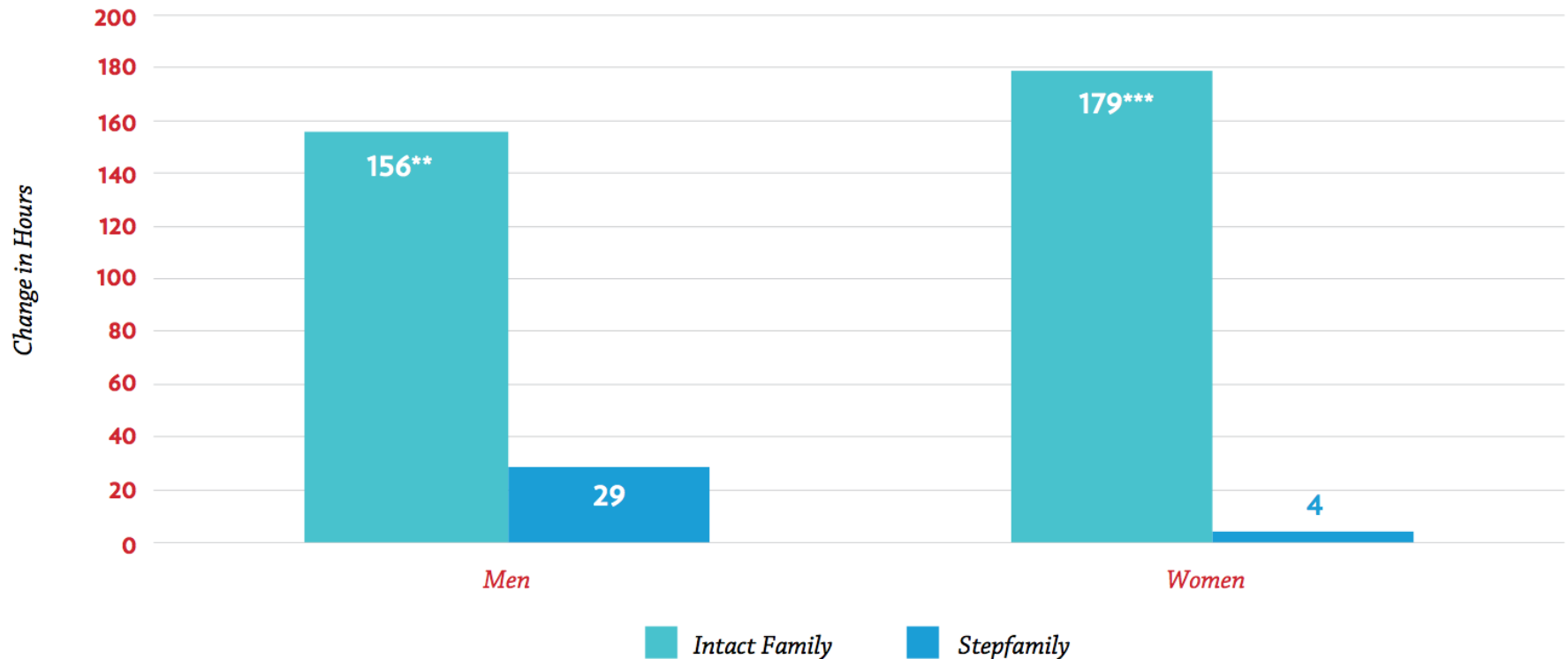


Source: Ellis et al., 2003

Family Factor & Young Adult Hours

FIGURE 10

Change in Hours Worked Per Year: 28- to 30-Year-Olds from Intact and Stepfamilies, Compared to Single-Parent Families



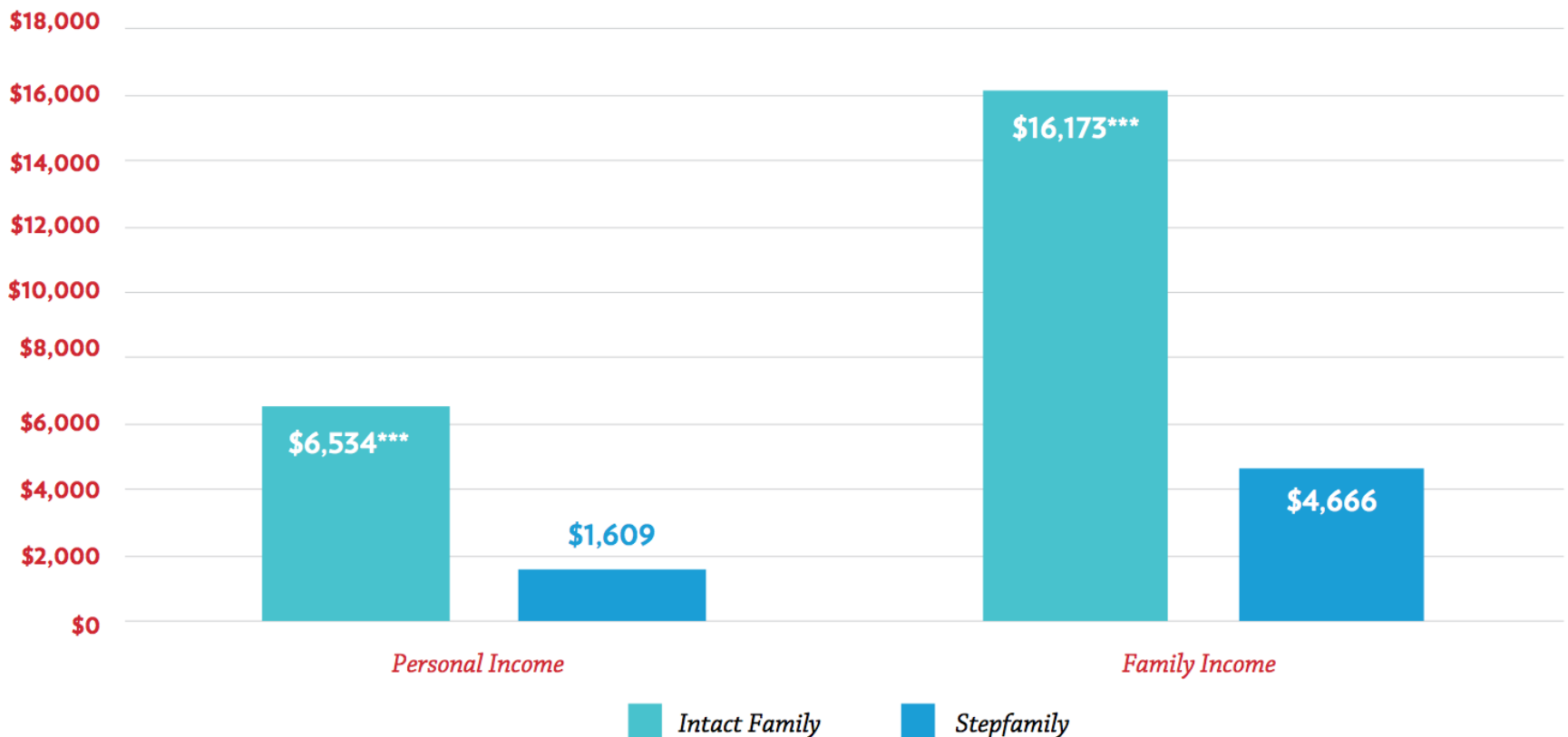
Source: NLSY97.

Note: Three asterisks indicate a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$) between the group and young adults from single-parent families, controlling for unemployment rate, respondent's age, respondent's race or ethnicity, mother's education, mother's age at respondent's birth, and AFQT score. Two asterisks indicate the same ($p < 0.05$).

Family Factor & Young Adult Income

FIGURE 11

Intact-Family Premium in Annual Income: 28- to 30-Year-Old Men from Intact and Stepfamilies, Compared to Single-Parent Families

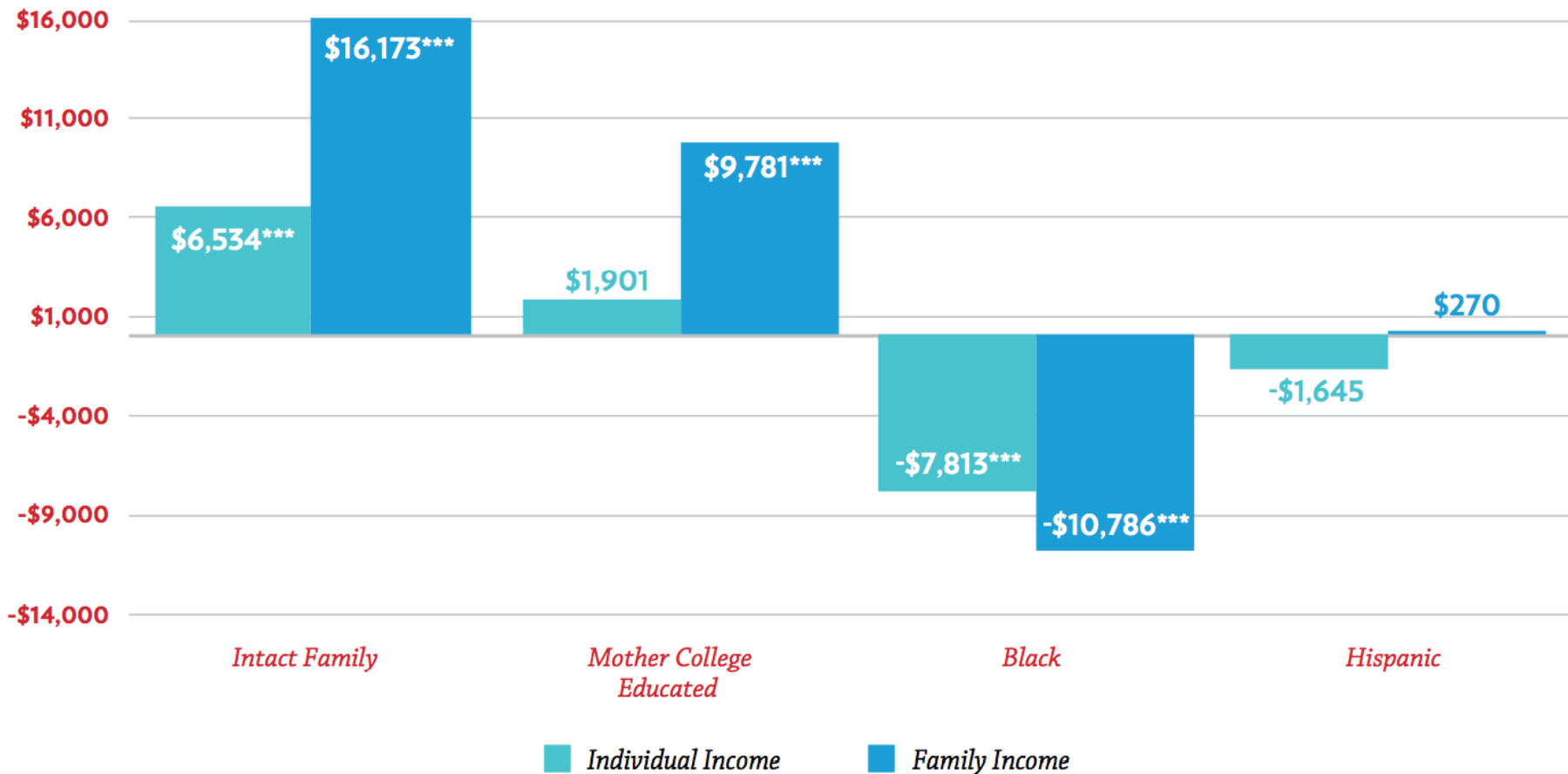


Source: NLSY97.

Note: Three asterisks indicate a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$) between the group and young-adult men from single-parent families, controlling for unemployment rate, respondent's age, respondent's race or ethnicity, mother's education, mother's age at respondent's birth, AFQT score, and, for "family income," household size.

The Family Factor Compared

Intact-Family, Mother's College, Racial, and Ethnic Premiums/Penalties for Men, 28–30 Years Old



Source: NLSY97.

Note: Models include variables presented above and unemployment rate, maternal age at birth, AFQT score, and, for "family income," household size. *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$.

Marriage Matters For Men



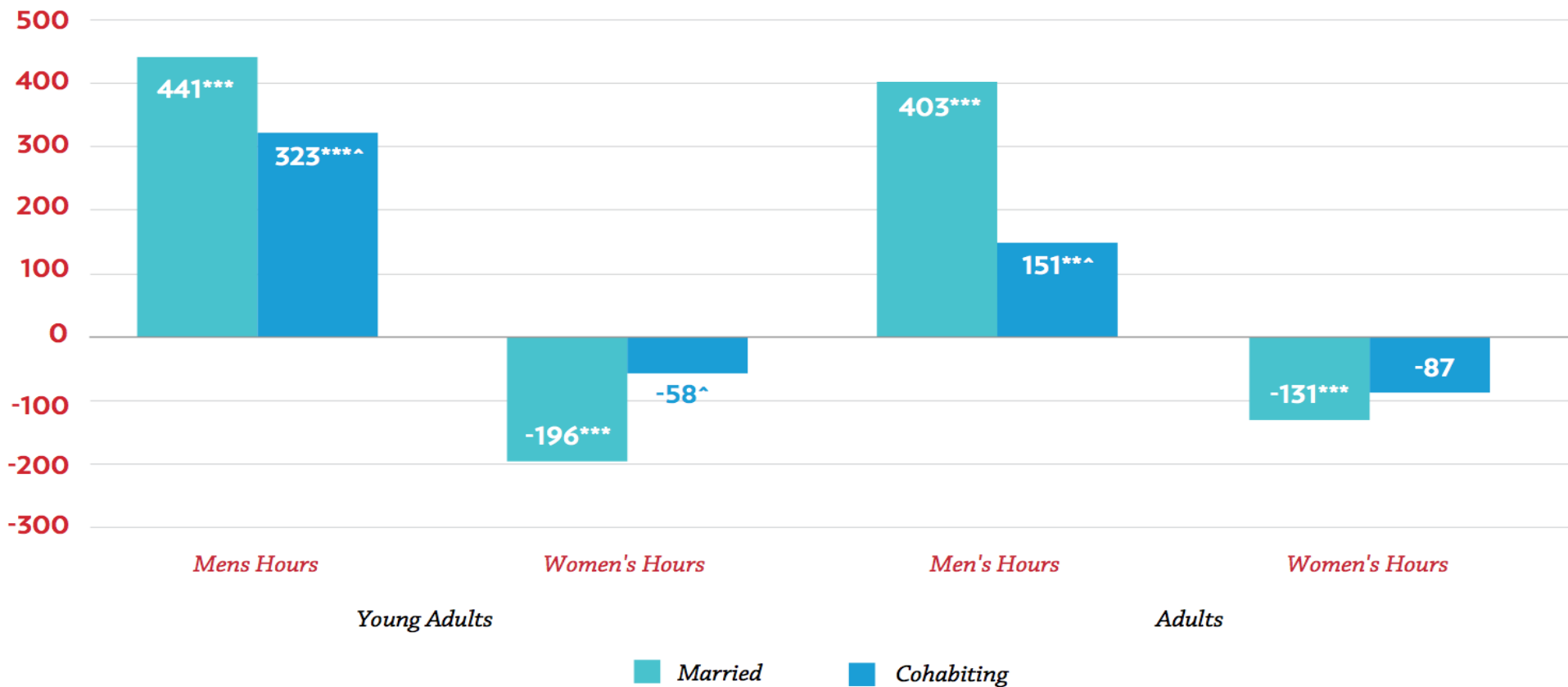
- George Akerlof (1998), the husband of Janet Yellen, on marriage and men:
- “Men settle down when they get married: If they fail to get married, they fail to settle down.”

Men at Work



FIGURE 17

Marriage Premium/Penalty in Annual Hours Worked: Young Adults (28–30 Years Old) and Adults (44–46 Years Old), Married and Cohabiting, Compared to Single



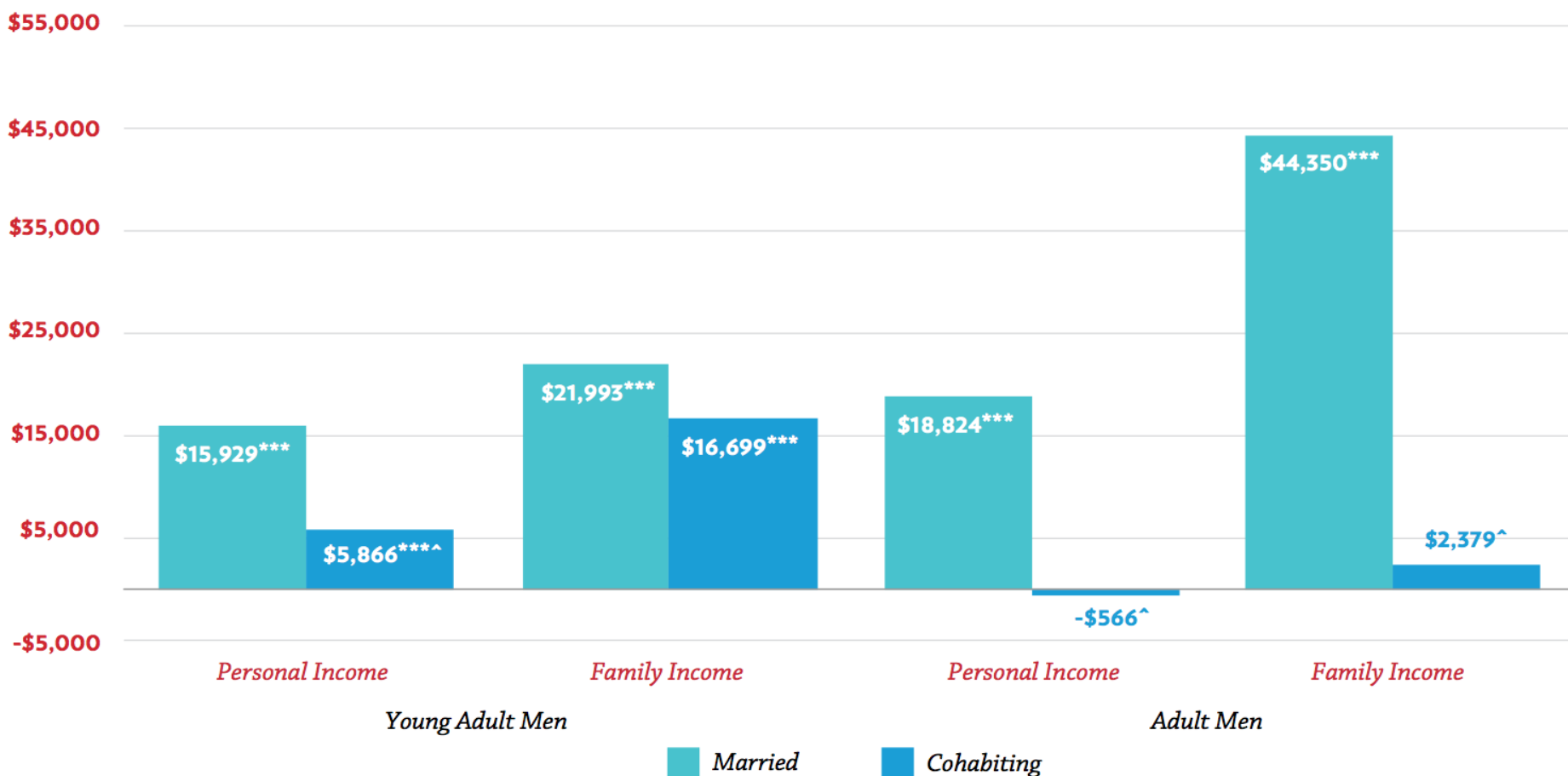
Men and Money



FIGURE 18

Marriage Premium/Penalty in Personal and Family Annual Income:

Young Adult Men (28–30 Years Old) and Adult Men (44–46 Years Old), Married and Cohabiting, Compared to Single



Sources: NLSY97 and NLSY79.

Women and Marriage

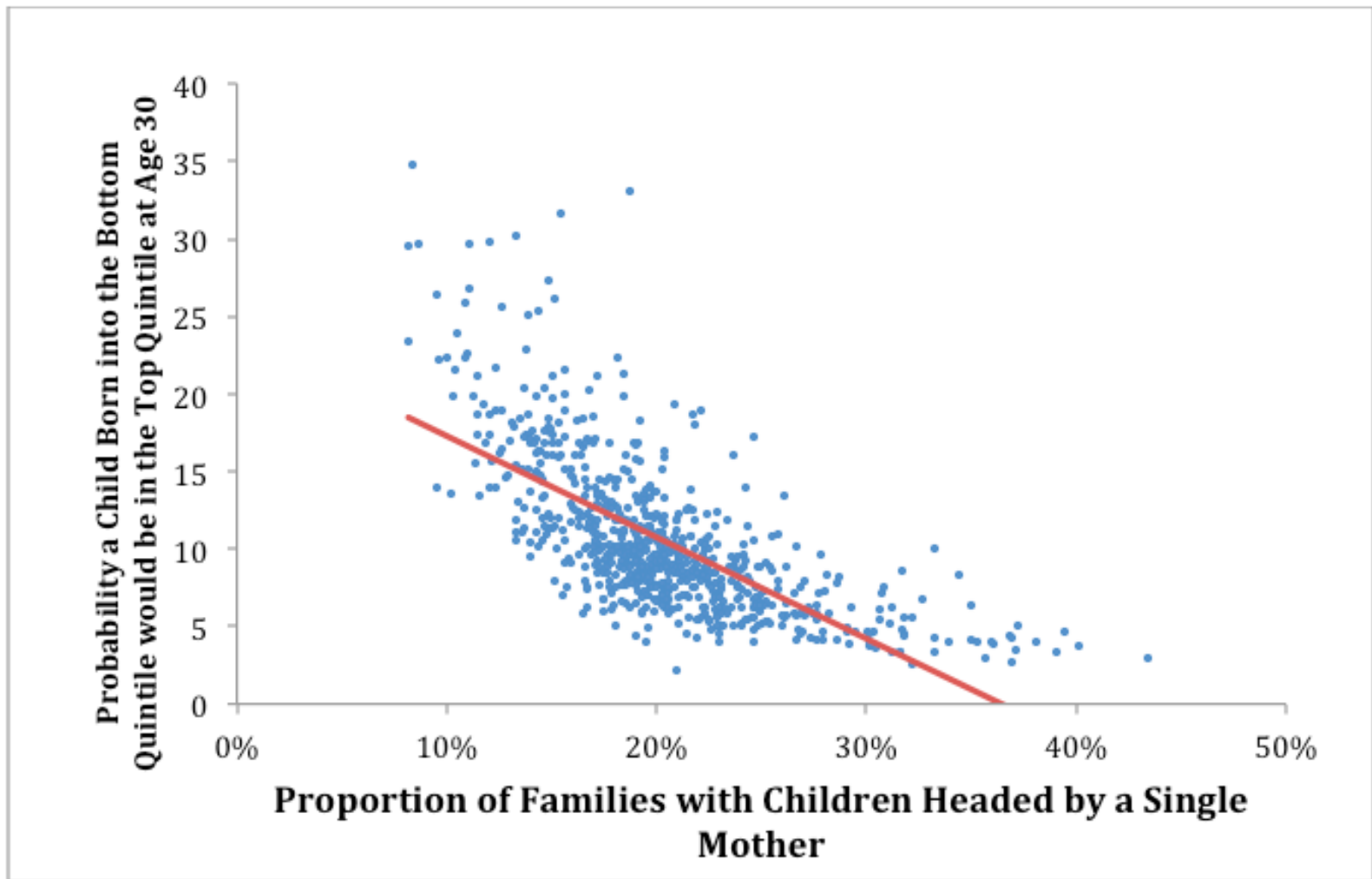


- Marriage exacts no penalty on women's personal income and furnishes a substantial premium to their family income.
- Indeed, motherhood penalty lowest among married mothers (Waldfogel and Pal 2014).
 - Especially today, having a committed partner helps when it comes to juggling work and family.

The Macro Story

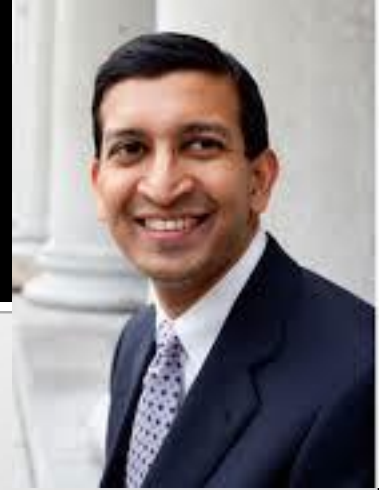
- Growing marriage divide is eroding the American Dream:
 - 1/3 of family income inequality
 - 1/3 of decline in male employment
 - Lower economic mobility for poor children

Community Family Structure & American Dream



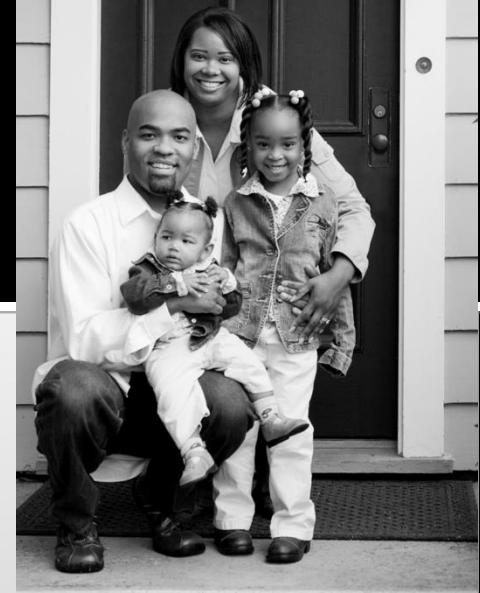
Source: Data from The Equality of Opportunity Project.

Harvard Study



- Harvard economist Raj Chetty: Community family structure is the “single strongest correlate of upward mobility.”
 - Children from single and two-parent families are more likely to succeed if they live in communities dominated by 2-parent families

The Family Foundations of Economic Success



The Bottom Line

- The family factor seems to be about as or almost as important as race, ethnicity, and education in shaping the odds of realizing the American Dream.
- The growing marriage divide is a major source of social & economic inequality, and is one largely unheralded force eroding the American Dream.

Why the Marriage Divide?

What is Driving the Marriage Divide?

- 3 causes:
 - A changing culture;
 - The rise of the post-industrial economy; and,
 - Bowling Alone: The retreat from civil society.

A Change of Heart



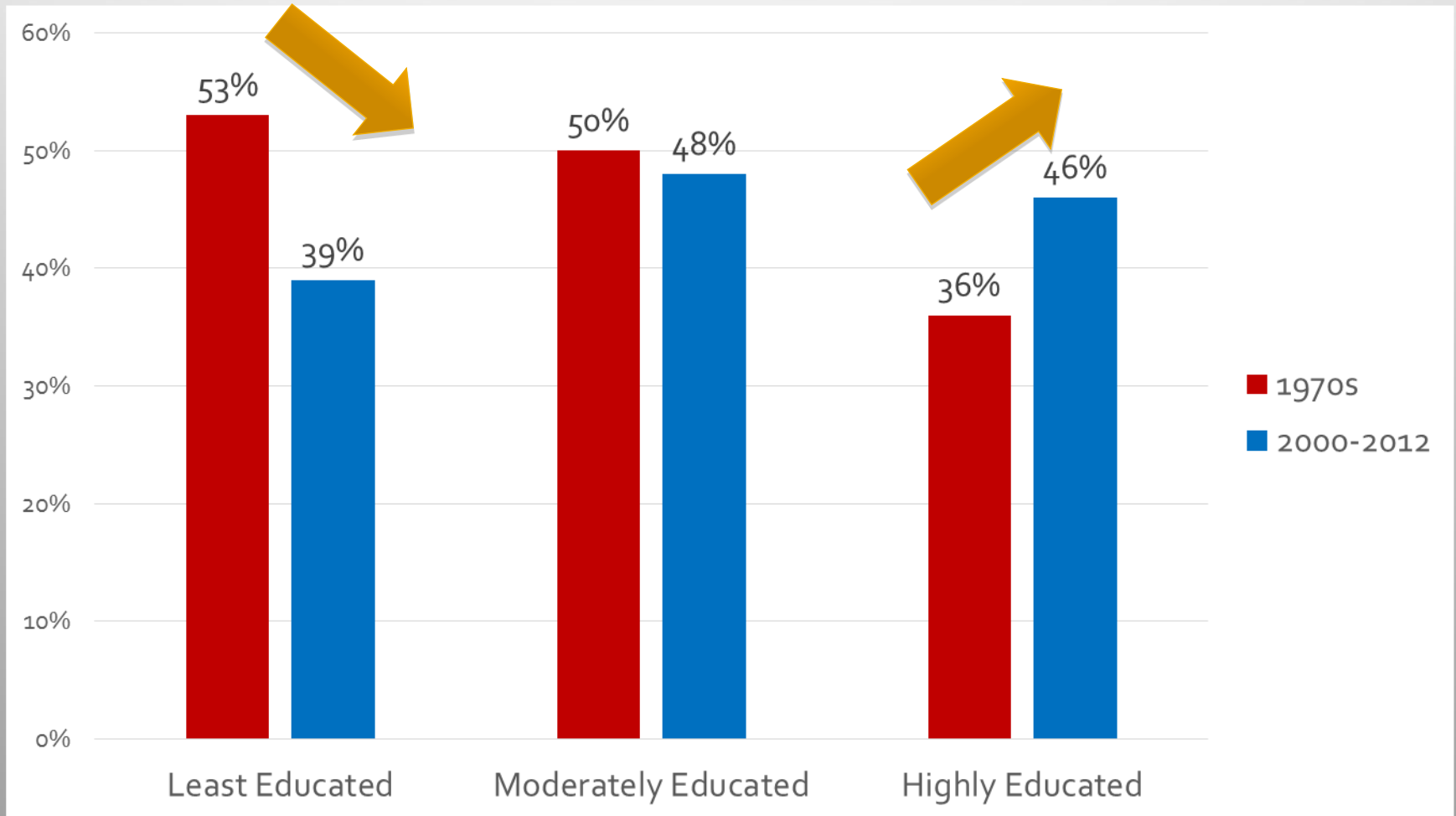
- Almost all Americans honor the ideal of marriage in theory but increasingly tolerant of departures from the ideal in practice.
 - Partly in the name of a “capstone model” of marriage that expects marriage to express and reinforce a high level of financial and emotional success. (Cherlin 2009)
- Cultural dynamic **most** consequential for less-educated Americans, who are now less likely to have a “marriage mindset” and the resources to realize the “capstone model”.

The Return of the Marriage Mindset among Upscale Americans



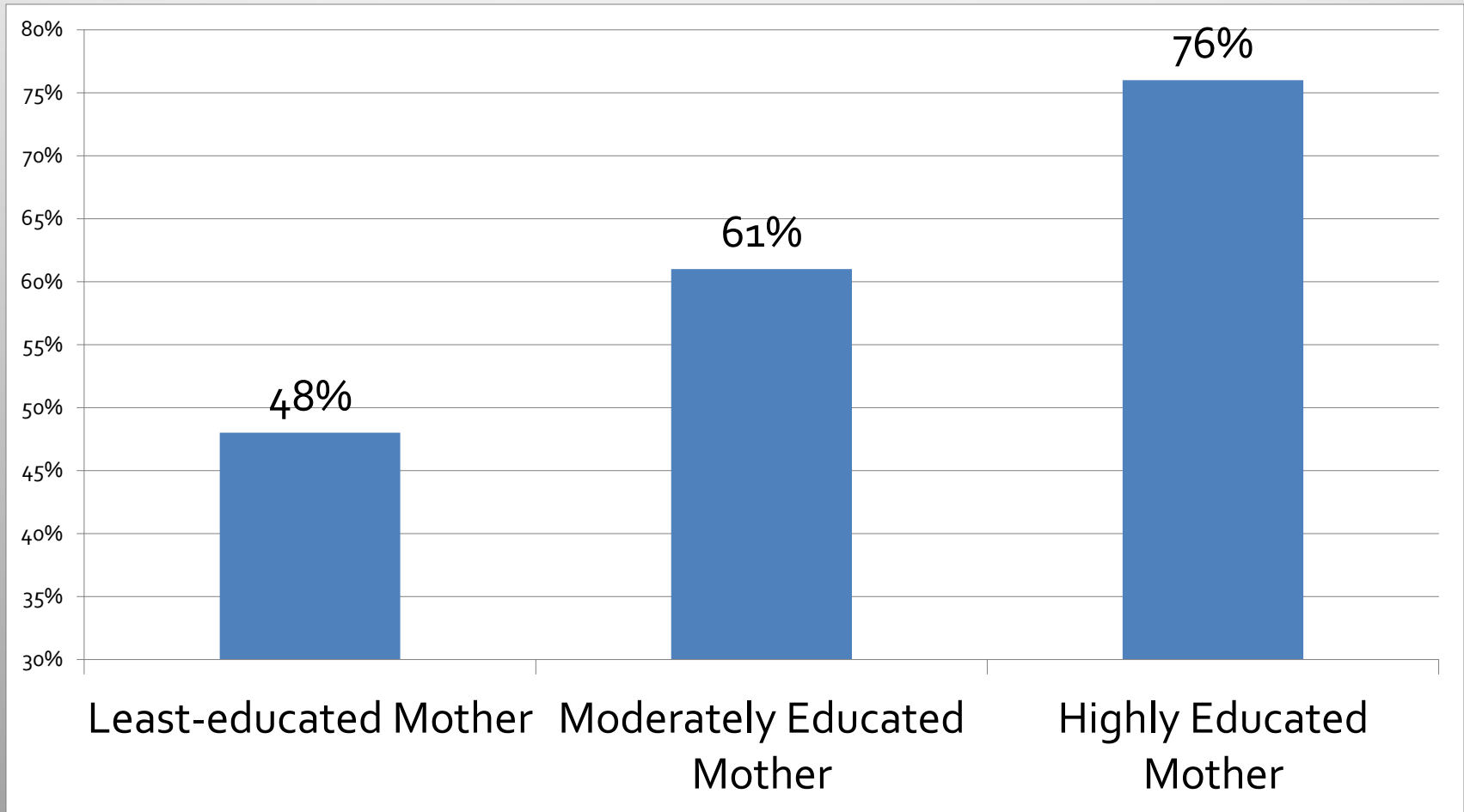
Restrictive Attitudes Toward Divorce

(Source: GSS)



Teens Embarrassed by Pregnancy

Source: NMP/IAV 2010



The Retreat from Institutions

- Less-educated Americans—especially men—are increasingly disengaged from the institutions of work and civil society—including religion.
- These institutions have traditionally supplied money, moral direction, & social support to marriage in America.

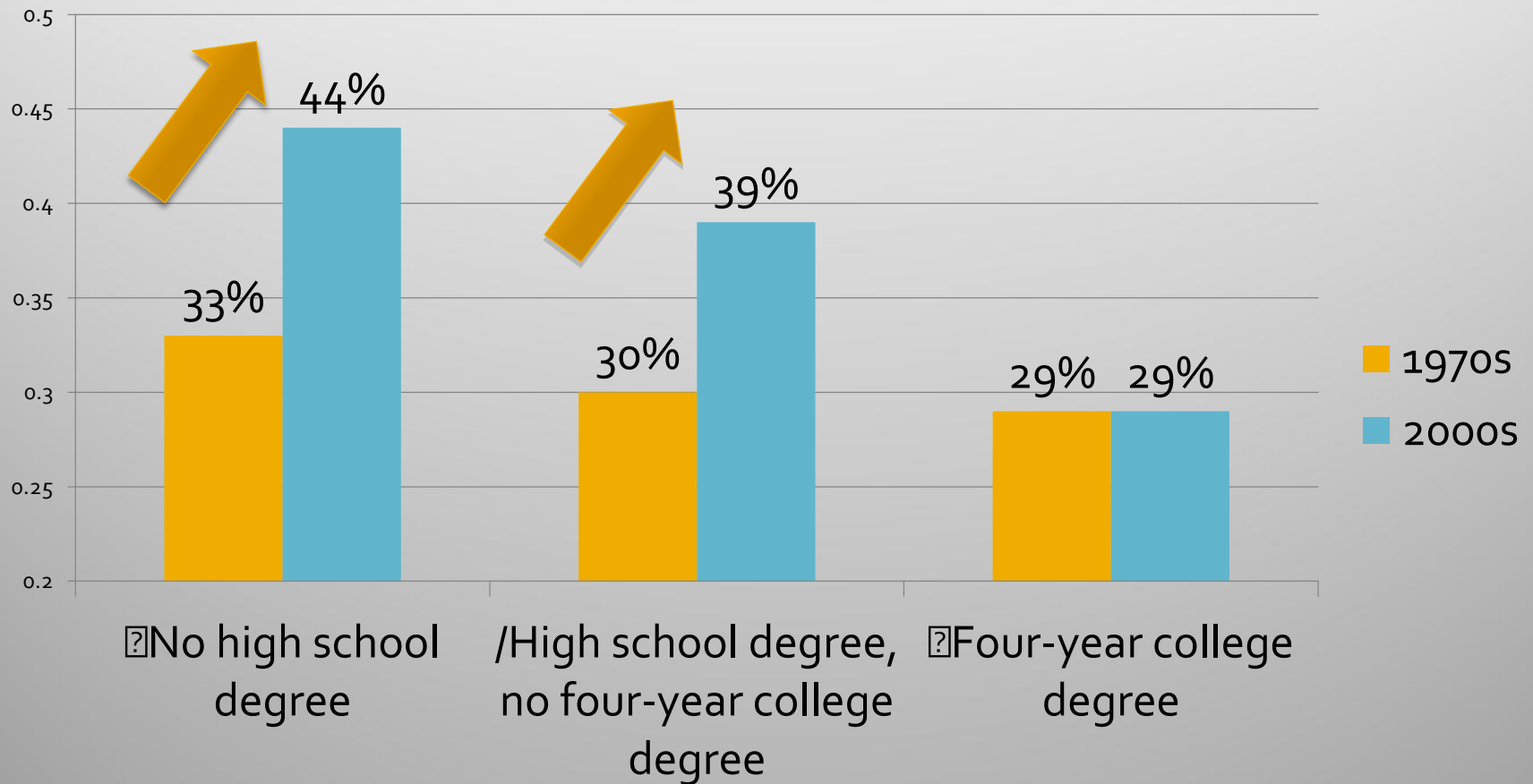


The Post-Industrial Economy

- Less-educated men have seen their economic fortunes fall over the last 40 years:
 - Falling real wages for high-school educated men;
 - Increasing spells of unemployment.
- Not true for highly educated men.
- Less-educated men are now less “marriageable”.

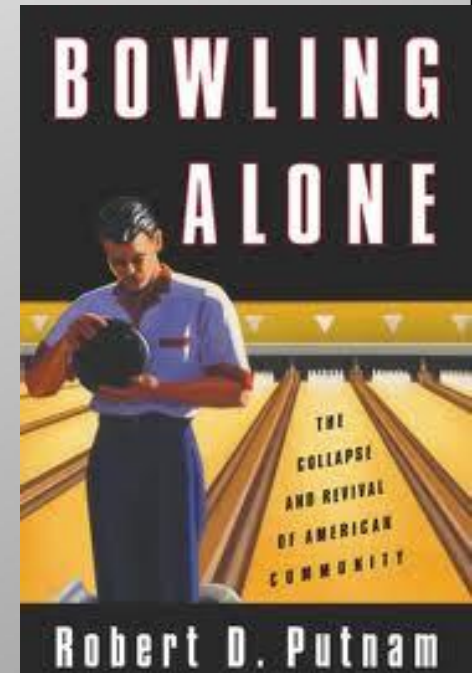
Spells of Male Unemployment in Last 10 Years

Source: NMP/IAV 2010



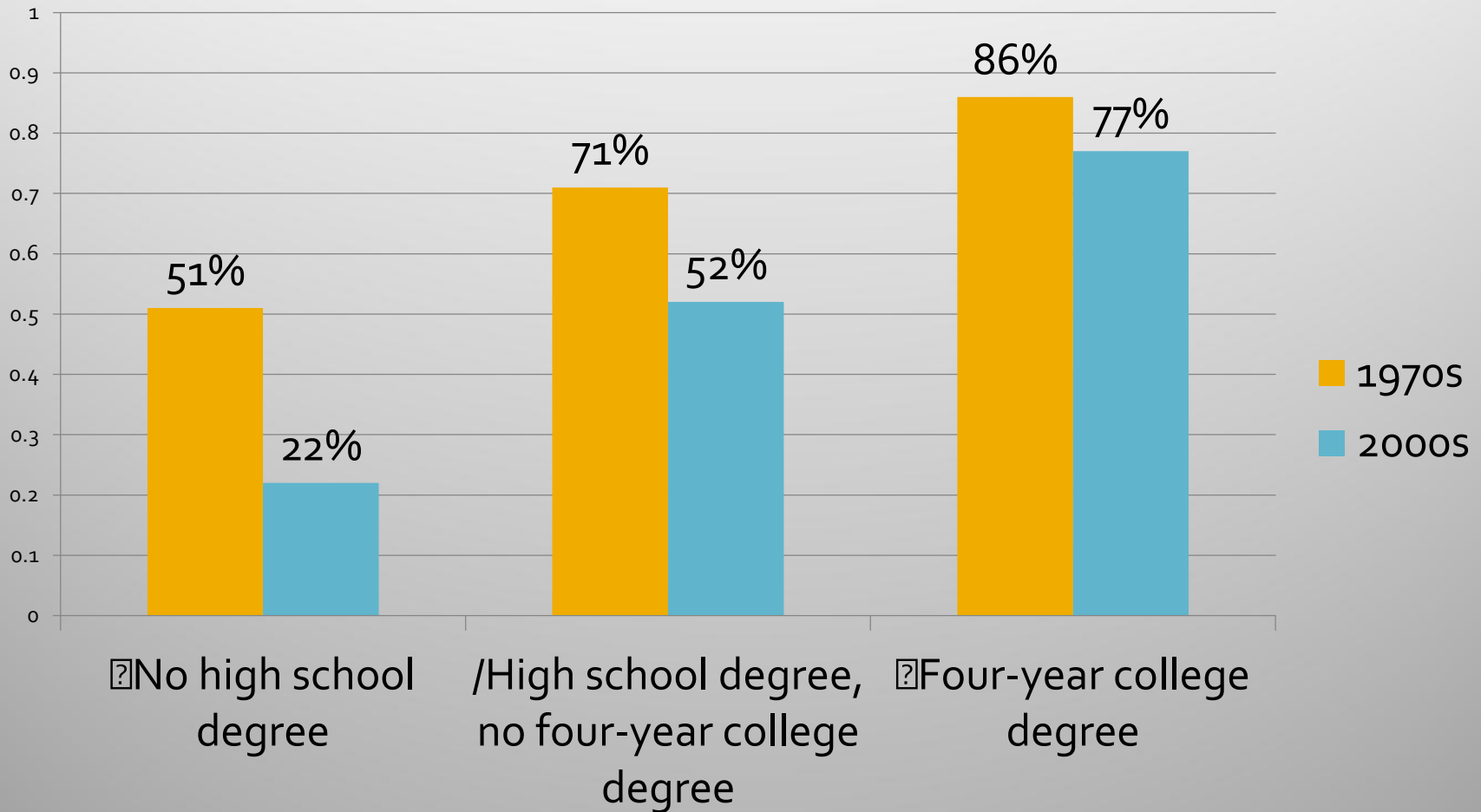
Bowling Alone in Middle America

- The last half-century has witnessed a marked decline in the civic & religious vitality of American society.
 - This decline is concentrated in Middle America.



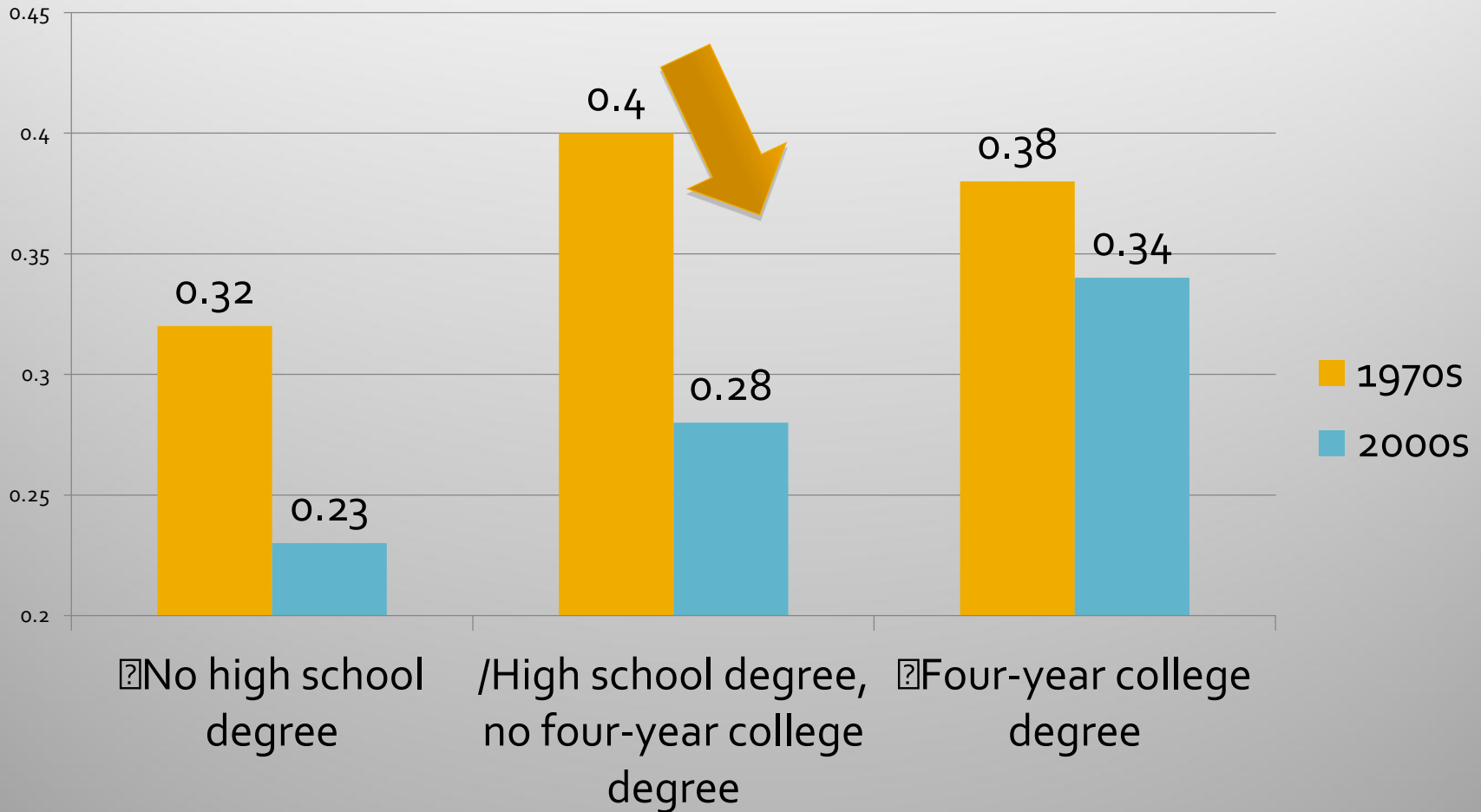
Bowling Alone: Percent Belonging to Non-Religious Civic Organization

Source: NMP/IAV 2010



Praying Alone: Weekly Attendees

Source: NMP/IAV 2010



The Marriage Divide

The Bottom line:

- Marriage divide is rooted in cultural, economic, & civic changes that have undercut the normative, financial, and communal bases of strong and stable marriages and families in poor and working-class communities.

What is to Be Done?

Do No Harm

- Public policy should seek to “do no harm” to marriage and two-parent families by penalizing marriage among low-income families:
- “[Most] households with children who earn low or moderate incomes (say, under \$40,000) are significantly penalized for getting married.”
~ Adam Carasso and C. Eugene Steuerle (2005)

Strengthen Economic Foundations

- To strengthen economic foundations of working-class and poor family life:
 - Expand child-tax credit to \$3000 and extend it to payroll taxes (Stein 2014);
 - Expand EITC to \$1000 for single adults with no children.

Improve Educational Opportunity

- Most Americans will not get a college degree.
- We need to improve vocational education & apprenticeship programs:
 - Career Academies boosts work hours, income, and marriage rates of young men from low-income families (MDRC 2008).
 - Apprenticeship programs in South Carolina, Georgia, and Wisconsin are boosting young adults' work and income.

Civic & Cultural Campaign

- Need a national campaign to expand civic and cultural supports for marriage:
 - “Success Sequence” (finish high school, work, marry & become a parent, in that order);
 - Relationship education focusing on working-class and poor couples and individuals.
 - Think especially hard about reaching less-educated men.
 - National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy is a model.

Conclusion



- Given the economic, social, & emotional benefits of marriage for adults, children, & the nation, we need to renew the
 - Economic
 - Policy
 - Civic &
 - Cultural

foundations of marriage & family life for 21st century.

More Information

www.family-studies.org

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