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New York Divorce and Family Law Blog

[Studies Consider Behaviors Predictive of Divorce](#)

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The reasons why marriages fail and couples divorce have been studied *ad nauseum*. Apparently, everything, including your smoking habits, age and even the state in which you reside is predictive of your odds of divorce.

[Annli Rufuse](#) on the [The Daily Beast](#) details 15 of these studies. Here are some of the more interesting ones:

- **If you live in a red state, you're 27 percent more likely to get divorced than if you live in a blue state.**

In red-state couples traditional in *The Compassionate Community: Ten Values to Unite America*, by Jonathan Miller and Al Goly marry younger—and the younger the partners, the riskier the marriage. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the states with the lowest median age at marriage are Utah, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Oklahoma.

(Source: National Vital Statistics Report, 2003; cited in *The Compassionate Community: Ten Values to Unite America*, by Jonathan Miller and Al Gore)

- **If your parents were divorced, you're at least 40 percent more likely to get divorced than if they weren't. If your parents married others after divorcing, you're 91 percent more likely to get divorced.**

This could be because witnessing our parents' divorces reinforces our ambivalence about commitment in a "disposable society," says Divorce Magazine publisher Dan Couvrette. "In most people's minds, it's easier to get a new car than fix the one you've got."

(Source: Nicholas Wolfinger, *Understanding the Divorce Cycle*, Cambridge University Press, 2005)

- **If only one partner in your marriage is a smoker, you're 75 percent to 91 percent more likely to divorce than smokers who are married to fellow smokers.**

"The more similar people are in their values, backgrounds, and life goals, the more likely they are to have a successful marriage," notes Tara Parker-Pope. From age to ethnicity to unhealthy habits, dissimilarities between spouses increase divorce risks.

(Source: Rebecca Kippen, Bruce Chapman and Peng Yu, "What's Love Got to Do With It? Homogamy and Dyadic Approaches to Understanding Marital Instability," Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, 2009)

- **If you have a daughter, you're nearly 5 percent more likely to divorce than if you have a son.**

This figure multiplies with the numbers of daughters or sons. "We think it happens because fathers get more invested in family life when they have boys," says Stephanie Coontz, author of *Marriage, a History* and director of research for the Council on Contemporary Families.

(Source: Gordon Dahl and Enrico Moretti, "The Demand for Sons," published in the *Review of Economic Studies*, 2005)

- **If you're of "below average" intelligence, you're 50 percent more likely to be divorced than those of "above average" intelligence.**

Presented by University of Delaware education professor Linda Gottfredson, codirector of the Delaware-Johns Hopkins Project for the Study of Intelligence and Society, this figure joins assertions in Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's controversial 1994 bestseller *The Bell Curve* that those with IQs of 100 face a 28 percent probability of divorce in the first five years of marriage, compared to just a 9 percent probability for those with IQs of 130.

(Source: Linda S. Gottfredson, "The General Intelligence Factor," *Scientific American*, Winter 1998, and Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles A. Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, Simon & Schuster, 1994, page 176)