



Study: Marriage benefits men economically, too

By Sharon Jayson, USA TODAY

If you think women still reap more economic benefit than men do from marriage, you may be living in the past.

Today, men are better off economically because their wives are, too, suggests a new study on the economics of marriage by the Pew Research Center.

It shows women's education and earnings advancements are translating into overall improvement for men.

"Marriage is a different deal than it was 40 years ago," says Pew economist Richard Fry, a co-author of the study. "Typically, most wives did not work, so for economic well-being, marriage penalized guys with more mouths to feed but no extra income. Now most wives work. For guys, the economics of marriage have become much more beneficial."

Pew used Census data from 1970 and 2007 to compare U.S.-born married people ages 30-44 — ages when "typical adults have completed their education, gone to work and gotten married," the study says.

The data show more women than men today have college degrees. In 1970, 64% of graduates were men and 36% were women; in 2007, 53.5% were women and 46.5% were men. Also, women's earnings grew 44% from 1970 to 2007, compared with 6% for men. Although men, on average, still make more, women's sharper gains have narrowed the gap.

Now, more women marry men with less education and lower earnings, and more men marry women who are more educated than they are and may earn more, Fry says.

"Just as women are saying they want more from marriage than an economic security blanket, men are more open to marrying women with more education and earnings," says historian [Stephanie Coontz](#), author of *Marriage: A History*.

But economist Betsey Stevenson, an assistant professor at the [University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School](#) in Philadelphia, says Pew's analysis is too limited.

"What they're raising is really an important question: Who has benefited more from increasing earnings of women in the labor market?" But she says the study doesn't look at other benefits, including who spends more within families. "Simply comparing earnings and educational attainment is not a very illuminating way to answer that question."

Stevenson says the study does provide further evidence that one-breadwinner marriages are

being replaced with marriages of "more equal market producers."

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