

Date Nights Linked to Stronger Marriages, More Sexual Satisfaction, According to New Study

Married couples who have regular nights out together report higher levels of relationship quality and sexual satisfaction

CARLOTTESVILLE, Virginia., February 9, 2023 – Many people enter into marriage seeking heightened levels of intimacy, communication and togetherness but struggle to keep the fires burning in their relationship. A new report from the National Marriage Project and the Wheatley Institute found that there may be a simple way to help keep your marriage strong: date nights.

In the second edition of the report entitled, “The Date Night Opportunity,” married couples across the United States were surveyed about their date night frequency and only about half of couples (48%) reported that they go on regular date nights. The report also found that those couples who participate in regular date nights at least of at least one or two times a month report greater levels of marital happiness, stability, and sexual satisfaction than those who don’t.

“Couples who devote time specifically to dating one another at least once or twice a month are markedly more likely to report better relationship quality compared to couples who do not go on dates as often,” said Jeffrey Dew, a fellow at the Wheatley Institute, and co-author of the report. “Because date nights seem to be valuable for couples, grassroots efforts to promote them around the nation may also foster higher-quality relationships and lower divorce rates in their sponsoring communities.”

The report examined the links between one-on-one couple time and relationship quality with data from a new survey, “The State of Our Unions Survey,” of 2,000 married men and women aged 18-55 in the United States. The survey was conducted by YouGov for the Institute for Family Studies and the Wheatley Institute in the Fall of 2022. Data from this study was used to determine (1) how date nights are linked to relationship quality, (2) whether one-on-one time is associated with lower divorce risks and (3) if date nights are tied to greater sexual satisfaction.

Among the report’s key findings:

- Husbands and wives who engaged in frequent date nights were 14 to 15 percentage points more likely to report being “very happy” in their marriages, compared to those who enjoyed infrequent date nights.
- Spouses who had frequent date nights were significantly more likely to report that divorce was “not at all likely” in their marriage (63% for wives; 60% for husbands) compared to those who infrequently or never go on dates (49% for wives; 47% for husbands).

- Nearly 2 out of 3 spouses who frequently go on dates report that they are highly satisfied with their sexual relationship (68% for wives; 67% for husbands), whereas less than half of spouses who don't go on regular dates report similar levels of sexual satisfaction (47% for wives; 47% for husbands).
- For couples who go on frequent date nights, nearly 3 out of 4 report being highly committed to their relationship (75% for wives; 73% for husbands) vs. only about half of those who don't (53% for wives; 51% for husbands).

“Engaging in a regular date night may be particularly valuable for contemporary married men and women, allowing them to keep the romantic embers of their relationship burning, in a day and age where we expect more emotionally from our marriages,” said Brad Wilcox, the Director of the National Marriage Project. “Date nights may be especially valuable in an era when married mothers and fathers devote so much time and attention to their children that they can end up neglecting their spouse.”

The report highlights five ways date nights are likely to foster stronger marriages and relationships:

1. **Communication.** Date nights enable couples to discuss important topics, shared dreams and future plans as their relationship develops without the distraction of children or employment responsibilities.
2. **Novelty.** Couples who participate in novel activities or experiences beyond a “dinner and a movie” outing but also experience exciting, active, or unusual activities – from hiking to dancing to travel to card games - enjoy higher levels of relationship quality.
3. **Eros.** Romantic love sustains couples who have frequent date nights as they share feelings and engage in romantic activities with one another and rekindle romantic sparks over time. This can also foster higher levels of sexual satisfaction.
4. **Commitment.** Couples’ sense of commitment to each other, which serves as a key component in stable and high-quality relationships, can be solidified on date nights by deepening their sense of togetherness during this one-on-one time.
5. **De-stress.** Stress is often relieved when partners step away from the pressing concerns of their regular lives to extend emotional support to one another.

“Efforts to promote date nights should provide couples with free or inexpensive options to rekindle the romance in their lives. From date nights at the local drive-in to free date night events in communities across the United States, date-night initiatives ought to be mindful of Americans of limited means,” said Wilcox. “After all, the date-night opportunity should extend to Americans of all economic statuses.”

For access to the full report, visit:

<https://nationalmarriageproject.org/blog/resources/2023-date-night-opportunity/>

About the National Marriage Project

The National Marriage Project was founded in 1997 by Rutgers University Sociology Professor David Popenoe. From 1997 to the summer of 2009, it was housed at Rutgers University and was directed by Drs. Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead. In the summer of 2009, the National Marriage Project moved to the University of Virginia, where it is now directed by Brad Wilcox, professor of sociology at the University of Virginia. The National Marriage Project (NMP) is a nonpartisan, nonsectarian, and interdisciplinary initiative located at the University of Virginia. The Project's mission is to provide research and analysis on the health of marriage in America, to analyze the social and cultural forces shaping contemporary marriage, and to identify strategies to increase marital quality and stability.

About the Wheatley Institute

The Wheatley Institute at Brigham Young University engages students, scholars, thought leaders, and the public in research-supported work that fortifies the core institutions of the family, religion, and constitutional government.