

## **CHILDREN FROM EX-PARTNERS DO NOT SPOIL FUTURE RELATIONSHIPS**

Having children from a previous partner does not affect the stability of future relationships, according to new research from the Institute of Education.

Using data collected from over 5,000 British women born in 1958, researchers looked at the effect of children on separation and marriage. The women were asked about all marriages and cohabitations lasting longer than one month between the ages of 16 and 42.

Dr Fiona Steele, who worked on the study, says: “Contrary to popular belief, children from previous relationships do not put future relationships at risk. With marriage and partnership break-ups increasing over recent years, this is a very positive finding.”

She adds: “Factors like social class and level of education made no difference to this finding – it was the same for relationships across the social spectrum.”

Other findings include:

- Children can help cement a partnership. Married parents with young children are less likely to divorce – having one pre-school child together makes them 40 per cent less likely to separate than couples without children. The odds of separation are reduced by a further 38 per cent if they have two or more young children.
- For cohabiting couples, the odds of separation are reduced by 25 per cent if there is one pre-school child and a further 44 per cent if there are two or more young children.
- The stabilising effect of children on parents’ relationships weakens as they get older.
- There is strong evidence that pregnancy precipitates marriage among cohabiters (“shot-gun” weddings). During pregnancy, the odds of marriage almost double.

### **ends**

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### **Notes for editors**

The research was carried out by Fiona Steele, research lecturer; Constantinos Kallis, research officer; Harvey Goldstein, professor of statistical methods; and Heather Joshi, professor of economic demography, at the Institute of Education, University of London.

The data are taken from the 1958 National Child Development Study (NCDS), which has tracked everyone born in Britain in one week in March 1958 from birth to present day. The study is housed in the Institute’s Centre for Longitudinal Studies, an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Resource Centre.

The Institute of Education is a college of the University of London, specialising in teaching, research and consultancy in education and related areas of social science and professional practice.