

When It Comes to Family, California's Elite Live Differently Than They Preach

California is famous the world over for Hollywood, Silicon Valley, progressive culture, and politics. New technology, new genders, family diversity – the Golden State celebrates it all. Yet it also has startling domestic secrets that are only now being discovered by social scientists.

Behind the doors of swanky neighborhoods like San Francisco's Pacific Heights, or Hollywood's Whitley Heights Historic District, you would be hard pressed to find even one single-parent family. In fact, new data reveals that 40 neighborhoods across California have virtually no single parents. Almost all children are being raised in two-parent families. Astonishing!

California's most stable neighborhoods (those with single-parenthood rates below 20 percent) have an average rate of single-parenthood of just 13 percent. Compare this with a state-wide rate of 31 percent and a national rate of 23 percent.

This, from the state that brought you no-fault divorce, "Friends" and countless other expressions of the liberal values that have played a prominent role in destabilizing family life. As the authors of a new report from the Institute for Family Studies put it:

It is striking, then, that ... California—despite being a global force for cultural liberalism—actually has a higher share of stable, married families than the nation as a whole. About 67% of California parents are in intact marriages, compared to 63% of American parents, according to an IFS analysis of the Census data. Likewise, 65% of children ages 0-17 in California reside with their married, biological

parents, compared to 62% of children in the United States. In other words, family life in the Golden State is more stable than in the country as a whole.

What gives?

The discreet conservatism of the liberal elite

IFS scholars Wendy Wang, W. Bradford Wilcox and Peyton Roth [have delved deep into survey data](#) and come up with answers that suggest we should take liberal elite narratives with a grain of salt. Here is what they found.

Those low-to-zero-single-parent neighborhoods in California are disproportionately populated by college-educated, high-income adults and their children. They obviously think that getting married and staying married is the best basis for family life – for themselves – and say so. But for others, anything goes.

Thus, in one survey of Californians aged 18 to 50:

- 85 percent with a college or graduate degree agreed that family diversity, “where kids grow up in different kinds of families today,” is something to be publicly celebrated, compared with 69 percent of Californians without a college education.
- Only a quarter of the college-educated agreed it was morally wrong for single women to have children on their own, compared with 31 percent of those with a high school or less education.

Personally speaking, though:

- Close to 70 percent of Californians with a college degree agree that “It’s very important for me,

personally, to be married before having my children,” compared with about 60 percent of their counterparts who do not have a college degree.

And in this case, better-educated Californians’ family life is more likely to conform to their personal views: A vast majority of college-educated parents have been married (94%)—only 6% are never-married parents. Contrast that 6% to the 23% of high school-educated Californian parents who have never been married. The marriage gap shows up in current living arrangements as well: 80% of Golden State parents with a college or graduate degree are in intact marriages, compared with 60% of those without a college degree.

Education = money, so the marriage picture is about money, isn't it?

No, because you can be well off and still less likely to be in a stable marriage than your economic peers. It depends on your personal values. The study shows that the minority of the college-educated who do *not* think it's very important to put marriage before the baby carriage are much less likely to be in an intact marriage (69 percent) than those whose values are more familistic (86 percent.) The gap is even bigger among the lesser educated: 36 percent vs. 58 percent. “In fact, it may be that familism is more important in stabilizing family life among less-educated Californians,” Wilcox and Wang suggest.

Although the scholars can't be sure the relationship between personal aspiration and marital status is causal, but personal values do seem to play a significant role “in whether someone finds themselves in a stable, married family.”

It's worth noting too, they say, that 44 percent of Californians agree that “couples with children should make every effort to stay married,” even if they are unhappy – a view held by 53 percent of those who have children, and only 38 percent of those who do not.

All that, however, is only half of the California family story.

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