

Marriage Meltdown - Slater & Gordon Report on the Modern Marriage



Millions of Brits are stuck in unhappy marriages but will not walk away for fear of financial or emotional hardship, a report revealed yesterday.

A study of 2,000 married people revealed a fifth feel 'trapped' and would end their marriage today if their future financial security was assured.

Meanwhile one in ten feels they are stuck in a 'loveless' marriage and 15 per cent of the study wished they'd married someone else.

When asked how their marriage could improve men were most likely to show frustrations with their sex life, while women were more concerned their marriage involved too little fun and too much worry over money.

The research, which was commissioned by Slater & Gordon Lawyers, revealed the full extent of doubt present in modern marriages - one third of the women studied had at one time considered ending their marriage.

Women were most likely to cite a fear of being unable to cope financially as their biggest reason for not separating, while men were most worried about the impact it would have on the family.

Yesterday, Slater & Gordon Family Lawyer Amanda McAlister said, "There is still a prevailing attitude in society that you should stay together no matter how unhappy you are. Obviously divorce should always be the last course of action a couple takes but the idea of hundreds of couples staying together despite being miserable because they worry about struggling financially is really sad to hear.

"Marriage when it works is fantastic but when it doesn't it can be a terrible strain on both parties as well as any children involved. My work as a family lawyer for the last 15 years has seen both men and women that have stayed in relationships that were loveless for years longer than they wanted because they felt guilty or scared to be alone. But the reality is that divorce can be a liberating experience and studies have shown that children are happier if their parents are happy."

Sadly, one quarter of married people are no longer 'in love' with their partner and three in ten have considered ending their marriage or spending time apart.

Arguments about money and rows over other family members were the most likely factors to drive a wedge between couples. Not having the courage to split from their partner renders one in ten married

people in a state of inaction, while men were more likely to admit that a fear of being left alone was the motivation for staying put.

More than half of the study felt their partners take them for granted, with a little less than three years the average length of time before people felt things started to slide. One third of married people genuinely doubt whether their marriage will last forever and a fifth feel the spark has completely faded.

Only four in ten say their marriage has turned out as they expected it to and when asked to score their marriage, 71 per cent was the average. Just 65 per cent of married people felt they got married to the right person, while a third felt there was someone else that got away or that they wished it had worked out with.

One in four married parents sometimes feel they only stay together for the sake of the children. While a fifth of the 2,000 married people studied said they hadn't always been faithful to their partner. Perhaps that's why only 55 per cent of the study felt marriage was for life and 29 per cent said they wouldn't advise young people today to follow in their footsteps and get married.

Amanda McAlister said, "Leaving an unhappy marriage no longer brings the same stigma it used to, people understand it's often the best solution for all parties involved. My advice to anyone feeling trapped or unhappy is to seek legal advice as early as possible before making a decision either way.

"Get all the information you need beforehand and a good lawyer will always be able to put you in touch with mediators and counsellors to make sure the process is as painless as possible. With the right team behind you there is no need for you to find yourself struggling financially or feeling scared."

TOP 10 REASONS BRITS PUT OFF DIVORCE

1. Not sure I have the courage
2. I might regret it
3. I'm hoping things will improve
4. It would have too big an impact on the family/ need to stay together for the kids
5. I wouldn't be able to sustain myself financially
6. I wouldn't want to leave my home or have to sell the family house
7. I'm too old to walk away now
8. I would feel guilty leaving them
9. I'm scared to be on my own
10. I'm worried about being lonely.

[Amanda McAlister](#) is National Practice Group Leader of Family Law at Slater & Gordon in Manchester.

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