Good Jobs, Strong Families: How the Character of Men's Work is Linked to Their Family Status

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The Institute for Family Studies and Penn's Program for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society

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Good Jobs, Strong Families:

How the Character of Men's Work is Linked to Their Family Status

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Introduction

Over the last half century, the U.S. economy has shifted, moving away from manufacturing and towards being an information and service economy. The mid-1980s, for instance, were punctuated by news of the closures of major steel manufacturers, including Homestead Works, Aliquippa Works, and Duquesne Works in Pittsburgh, PA, and Republic Works in Youngstown, OH. The closures were part and parcel of a period of massive deindustrialization. Between 1984 and 2004, the U.S. economy lost between 6 and 7 million manufacturing jobs that provided reliable and high-paying employment with good benefits for millions of working-class Americans.[1]

The move away from manufacturing had a significant impact on America's working class. Real wages of the median Americans with a high school diploma or less (a common measure of "working class") declined by 11% between 1979 and 2019, while those of the median worker who had finished college increased by 15 percent.[2] Many industrial communities, especially across America's "Rust Belt," experienced significant disinvestment and fell into blight. These economic shifts, both in the Rust Belt and nationwide, took a devastating toll. They pushed working-class men's labor force participation down and led to declines in religious and secular expressions of community life in areas hit hardest by deindustrialization. Families not only broke apart but failed to form. In the wake of this economic dislocation and social breakdown, deaths of despair—

that is, deaths from drug overdoses, suicides, and alcoholism—surged among working-class women and especially men.[3]

The transformation of the American economy has been especially impactful on working-class men. As manufacturing receded, employment in service industries surged, especially in healthcare, financial, and information services.[4] Many of these service jobs require a college degree. And most of the significant growth in jobs that do not require a college degree has been concentrated in industries and occupations that are female dominated. Since 1990, the healthcare industry alone has added roughly 9 million jobs to the US economy.[5] Nearly 80% of Americans who do not have a college degree and work in healthcare are women.[6] In fact, declines in real wages for working-class workers were concentrated among men; working-class women have seen their real wages rise since 1979.[7]

Over this same period, Americans have also experienced a significant reduction in marriage and family stability. Since 1970, the marriage rate has fallen by more than 60% to the point where only about 1 in 2 adults are married.[8] Declines in marriage and family stability have been especially precipitous for working-class Americans since 1980. For instance, only 39% of non-college-educated Americans ages 18-55 are married, compared to 58% of college-educated Americans.[9]

It is reasonable to think there is a relationship between these trends in marriage and work. First, men who do not have steady, well-paying jobs with benefits are often less appealing to women, making it more difficult for them to match and marry. One Pew survey found that 78% of never-married women reported that it was "very important" that a potential spouse have a "steady job"; only 46% of men placed the same emphasis on work for a potential spouse.[10] Another recent study found that women are still markedly more likely to marry men with higher incomes than themselves.[11] The research also indicates that men who are stably employed are more likely to get and stay married, in part, because they bring financial resources to their relationship and family life.[12] Good jobs for men, it would seem, make for more marriage, even as bad or no jobs make for less marriage. This was a key message from sociologist William Julius Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged*, in which he underlined the ways in which the existence and character of work influenced

men's "marriageability."[13] Accordingly, one reason that working-class men are less likely to be married is that they are relatively less marriageable today—earning comparatively less and being less likely to be employed full time—than they once were.

However, the relationship between work and marriage is complex. In his book *Marriage in Men's Lives*, sociologist Steven Nock taught us that marriage also changes men in ways that make them work harder, more strategically, and more successfully—financially speaking.[14] This helps account for the male "marriage premium," which is the finding that married men make more money than their unmarried peers, even after controlling for differences in background characteristics.[15] This premium is linked to the ways in which men and women still associate male breadwinning with marriage and family life. In fact, the marriage premium is largest for men who are married with children in an intact family.[16] This dynamic suggests that one reason working-class men are less attached to the labor force today than they were a half century ago is that they are less likely to be married with children.

Finally, there are also likely other factors, from personality traits to differences in family of origin, that account for the link between male employment and marriage and family formation. Men who are more responsible, for instance, are more likely to be married and employed.[17] And young men who are raised in stable families are more likely to graduate from college, be stably employed, and earn more as young adults, compared to their peers raised in non-intact families.[18] This suggests broader shifts in culture and family in working-class America may also have a hand in working-class men's detachment from full-time work.

Our hypothesis in this Institute for Family Studies (IFS) report, however, is that the nature and character of work play a key role in affecting male marriageability. We contend that features of work like job stability, predictable hours, good benefits, and high pay help men to flourish and, in turn, elevate their appeal as husbands.[19] Moreover, we note that class divides in marriage today are driven in part by differences in the character of work, with college-educated men generally benefiting, in terms of marriage and family formation, from jobs that are more stable, predictable, higher status, and remunerative.[20] But we also suspect that the character of work varies among working-class men themselves, such that

some jobs among working-class men are more likely to facilitate marriage and family formation than others.

In this report, we examine family formation among working class men, defined here as men without college degrees, within the context of distinct employment environments. We also examine differences in married family formation rates—measured here in terms of being married with children at home—between working-class and college-educated men, and we investigate the extent to which these differences might be explained by differences in "good job" variables—primarily differences in pay, benefits, and stability. We then explore differences in the rates of married family formation among working-class men by industry and estimate the extent to which differences across industries are explained by the same "good job" variables. We conclude with a discussion of how public policies might better support working-class men in their jobs to improve their family prospects.

Methods: Trends in Family Formation Rates

Data: For the analyses describing long-term trends in family formation, we used data from the US Census and American Community Survey. We used the 1% random sample of the Census data from the years 1980, 1990, and 2010. For the years 2010 and 2021, we used the American Community survey, which is a sample survey of approximately 1% of American Households (3.5 million). We use data from 2021, rather than 2020, as the weights used in 2020 were experimental to account for the impacts of COVID-19. The Census Bureau urges caution when comparing 2020 data to other historical data. We accessed these data through the IPUMS USA platform.

Samples: Examining trends in family formation, we focus on all prime working-age men (25-54) in the Census and American Community Survey data. We have 584,956 observations in year 2021, and 2,703,953 total across all years.

Measuring married family formation rates: A married family is defined here as a man living in the same home with his spouse and having an "own child" present in the home. This includes step, adopted, or biological children.

Measuring working class: We measure working class based on educational attainment as the number of years of completed schooling. A man is considered "working class" if he completed fewer than 4 years of college and "college educated" if he completed at least 4 years of college.

Part 1: Family Formation Among Working-class Men

Trends in family formation rates

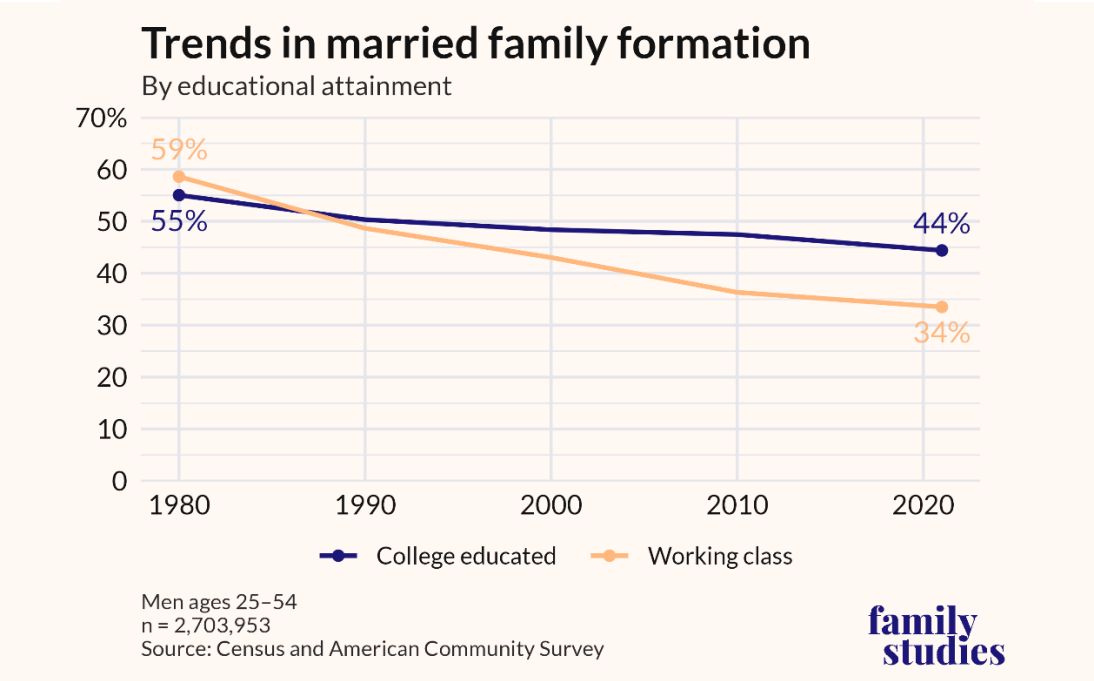
In this section, using historical Census data from 1980-2021, we discuss recent family formation trends among working-class men.[21] Working class throughout this report is operationalized as completion of less than a college education. Here, college education is defined as completion of at least four years of college. Importantly, this is slightly different than the operationalization of "working class" because the measures of educational attainment in historical Census data are slightly different from the CPS data used in subsequent analyses.

There is ample evidence that college-educated Americans are more likely to get married, stay married, and avoid having children out of wedlock. This is partly because more educated men and women have more stable incomes, more shared assets, greater civic supports for their marriages, and networks that are dominated by married peers, as Wilcox argued in *Get Married*.[22]

However, this has not always been the case. In fact, before the 1980s, men who did not complete college had higher rates of married family formation compared to those who did complete college. In our analysis of Census data, we found that in 1980, 59% of all prime working-age men (ages 25-54) who did not complete college were married with children living in their homes, compared to 55% of men who did complete college.

Over the course of the next 40 years, all men in America were increasingly less likely to be married and living with children. By 2021, only 37% of prime working-age men were married living with children compared to 58% in 1980 (Figure 1). But the overall decline in married family formation was more significant for men who had not completed college. Over the last 40 years, men who had not graduated from college were now actually *less* likely than college-educated men to be married and living with their own children. By

2021, 34% of non-college-educated, prime working-age men were married and living with their own children compared to 44% of college-educated men.



We examine more closely family formation rates among working-class men ages 25-54 in 2021 (Table 1). We find that working-class men (33.55%) are much less likely to be married with children living in their homes compared to college-educated men (44.43%). At the same time, they are much more likely to cohabit with children in the home (5.99% vs. 1.93%) and to be living with no partner and without children (39.56% vs. 29.18%).

Table 1: Family formation rates among men by working-class status

	All working- class men	College-educated men
Married with children in the home	33.55%	44.43%
Married with no children in the home	10.89%	15.57%
Cohabitation with children in the home	5.99%	1.93%
Cohabitation with no children in the home	5.17%	6.47%
Not living with partner but children in the home	4.84%	2.43%
Not living with partner without children in the home	39.56%	29.18%

Men ages 25-54

n = 584,956

Source: American Community Survey (2021)

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Methods (Parts 2 and 3): Family Formation Rates by Class and Industry

Data Sources: In these analyses, we use the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS), which is a survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The ASEC is administered to the May cohort of the CPS to gather detailed economic and insurance information data. We accessed these data through the IPUMS CPS platform.

Samples: The sample for the analyses of married family formation rates by class (Part 2) includes all men ages 25-54 from the CPS in years 2021-2024. This includes a total of 113,565 individuals of which 70,835 were working-class men, and 42,730 who were college-educated men. For analyses by industry (Part 3), we focus only on working-class men 25-54 who worked at any time during the observation year, which includes a total of 61,284 individuals. We focused on those who worked during the year as they had non-missing industry data. Descriptive statistics for these Part 2 samples are shown in Appendix Table A1 and for Part 3 in Appendix Table A2.

Measuring married family formation rates: A family is considered married if the man lived in the same home with his spouse and they had their "own child" present in the home. This includes step, adopted, or biological children. Recognizing that children enter marriage at different times and many older, prime working-age men may have children who have moved out of the home, we have performed a sensitivity analysis using only marriage rates. These results generally agreed with our findings related to married family formation rates.

Measuring working class: We measure working class based on educational attainment. Those who have not completed a bachelor's degree are considered working class, while those who have completed a bachelor's degree are considered not working class.

Good job variables:

Good wage: Individual income more than $60,000 per year.

Benefits: Taking up employer sponsored health insurance as well as military coverage. Notably, the health insurance can come from any source, including the spouse. This is a limitation of the analysis.

Stability: Usually employed full time last year and not experiencing any months of being laid off.

Industry: The primary industry in which the person worked last year.

Analysis: We report adjusted rates of married family formation and good jobs by class and industry. We also report adjusted rates of family formation by good job variables. To do this, we estimate regressions (linear probability models) controlling for age, Hispanic ethnicity, foreign born, and region. The food and hospitality industry, which had the lowest rates of family formation, was used as the referent category in all regressions. As a robustness check, we also estimate logistic regression models. The results are the same. Using post-estimation commands, we calculate predicted probabilities based on the regression coefficients. We also estimate the extent to which good job variables mediate the relationship between industry and married family formation rates. To do this, we use the Baron and Kenny framework. For a moderation relationship to exist, four conditions must be met: 1) significant relationship between class or industry and married family formation (equation 1); 2) industry or class must be a significant predictor of good job variables (equation 2); 3) good job variables must be a significant predictor of married family formation (equation 3); 4) the relationship between industry and married family formation must be attenuated toward zero when good job variables are added into the equation 1 (equation 4). We use the predicted probabilities from equation 1 to estimate the marginal percent difference between each industry and food and hospitality on rates of married family formation rates. We then estimate the marginal percent difference in the same rates of married family formation after controlling for good job variables (equation 4). We then divide the difference in these marginal percent differences by the marginal percent difference in equation 1.

Part 2: Examining Married Family Formation by Class and the Impact of Good Job Variables

Married family formation rates by class

This section compares all college-educated versus working-class men. We are interested primarily in the links between class, workplace environment, and family status. For this analysis, we used data from the Current Population Survey from years 2021-2024. We used regression models to estimate predicted probabilities of having a married family by education, which we view as a proxy for class. In our sample of 113,656 prime working-age men, we find that working-class men are 8 percentage points less likely than college-educated men to be married and living in the home with their children (Table 2). Regression coefficients used to produce these adjusted rates are shown in Appendix Table A3.

Table 2: Adjusted rates of married family formation among prime working-age men by class

Working class	36.87%
College educated	45.19%

Men ages 25-54
Adjusted rates controlling for age, Hispanic ethnicity, foreign born, and region
All differences significant at p-value < 0.05
n = 113,565
Source: Current Population Survey

Mediation of differences across class by good job variables

We then examine the extent to which differences in married family formation across classes might be explained by differences in the types of jobs that working-class and college-educated men hold (i.e., good job variables). To determine the extent to which differences could be explained by good job variables, we performed a mediation analysis using the Baron and Kenny framework.[23] To do this, we must first establish that good job variables are associated both with class and married family formation. If so, we can test the mediation impact of good job variables on marriage formation rates.[24]

We first compare good job variables across working-class and college-educated men. We find significant differences across classes. Most notably, a majority of college-educated men (61.33%) make a "good wage" (i.e. >$60,000 per year) compared to a minority of working-class men (26.18%). College-educated men are also much more likely to have stable jobs. They are also about 20 percentage points more likely than working-class men to have employer-sponsored health benefits. They are much more likely to have all three good job characteristics at their current employer (Table 3). Regression coefficients used to produce these adjusted rates are shown in Appendix Table A4.

Table 3: Adjusted rates of good job characteristics by class

	Good wage	Stability	Benefits	Good job
Working class	26.18%	72.76%	60.12%	22.28%
College educated	61.33%	85.24%	82.11%	55.83%

Men ages 25-54

Adjusted rates controlling for age, Hispanic ethnicity, foreign born, and region

All differences significant at p-value < 0.05

n = 113,565

Source: Current Population Survey

These good job characteristics are also correlated with married family formation rates. We find that those with good job characteristics are much more likely to be married family men. Those with all three of these good job characteristics are 17 percentage points more likely than those who do not have all three of these characteristics to have a married family (Table 4). Regression coefficients used to produce these adjusted rates are shown in Appendix Table A5.

Table 4: Adjusted rates of married family formation by good job variables

Good Wage	
Yes	47.29%
No	35.37%
Stability	
Yes	42.42%
No	32.15%
Benefits	
Yes	41.98%
No	36.05%
All Three	
Yes	51.01%
No	34.16%

Men ages 25-54
Adjusted rates controlling for age, Hispanic ethnicity, foreign born, and region
All differences significant at p-value < 0.05
n = 113,565
Source: Current Population Survey

Finally, we examined the extent to which the good job variables mediate the relationship between class and family formation rates. Table 5 shows that good job variables are in fact a significant meditator between class and married family formation. These good jobs variables explain nearly 80% of the adjusted differences in married family formation rates by class (Table 5). This is a striking finding. It underlines the ways in which the character of college-educated men's jobs probably helps explain why they are markedly more likely to get and stay married than working-class men. Of course, we cannot determine the direction of causality here. All that we can say is the class divide in marriage between college-educated and working-class men is closely tied to the class divide in the character of men's work. Regression coefficients used to produce these adjusted rates are shown in Appendix Table A3.

Table 5: Differences in married family formation rates explained by good job variables

Difference in family formation rates	Difference in family formation after controlling for good job variables	Difference explained by good job variables
8.32%	1.78%	78.61%

Men ages 25-54

Adjusted rates controlling for age, Hispanic ethnicity, foreign born, and region.

All differences significant at p-value < 0.05

n = 113,565

Source: Current Population Survey

Part 3: Examining Married Family Formation by Industry Among Working-class Men

Married family formation rates by industry

Patterns of married family formation for working-class men differ by employment industry. In this section, we focus exclusively on men who report having worked during the observation year. Only those who worked at some point during the observation year will have data on primary industry. For this analysis, we used data from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS) from years 2021-2024. Table 6 indicates wide variation across industries in terms of the rates of married family formation for working-class men. The highest married family formation rates among working-class men are in the armed forces and public order and safety, followed by trucking, construction, and maintenance and repair. The high rates of married family formation in the armed forces are consistent with earlier research indicating that the armed forces continue to support marriage and family life.[25] Surprisingly, manufacturing falls in the middle. By contrast, the lowest shares of married family formation for working-class men are in healthcare, retail, and food and hospitality. Regression coefficients used to produce these adjusted rates are shown in Appendix Table A6.

Table 6: Adjusted rates of married family formation rates by industry

	All working-class men
Armed Forces	69.80%*
Public order and safety	54.16%*
Trucking	44.06%*
Construction	42.28%*
Maintenance and repair	42.38%*
Manufacturing	39.94%*
All other industries	39.94%*
Healthcare	35.28%*
Retail	33.50%*
Food and hospitality (Reference)	28.52%

Working-class men ages 25-54 who worked at all in observation period.
Adjusted rates controlling for age, Hispanic ethnicity, foreign born, and region
* Difference significant from "Food and hospitality" at p-value < 0.05
n = 61,284
Source: Current Population Survey

Mediation of differences across industries by good job variables

For working-class men, there is clearly variation between industry and family structure. How much are differences in married family formation rates across industries linked to differences in "good job" variables, including pay, health insurance benefits, and stable employment? In this section, we take up this question.

To determine the extent to which differences could be explained by these good job variables, we again performed a mediation analysis using the Baron and Kenny framework. In examining the relationship between industry and good job variables, we find that some industries have more good job characteristics than others, as Table 7 indicates. Public order and safety, armed forces, trucking, and manufacturing have higher rates of good wages, while retail, food and hospitality, and maintenance and repair have significantly lower rates. Likewise, there are significant differences in job stability across industries with public order and safety, manufacturing, armed forces, and trucking enjoying the highest rates of stability, while food and hospitality have the lowest. In terms of benefits, public order and safety, manufacturing, trucking, healthcare, and, especially, armed forces have the highest rates of uptake of employer sponsored health insurance, while construction, food and hospitality, and maintenance and repair have the lowest. Again, our results here are indicative of the marriage- and family-friendly character of military jobs. Overall, public order and safety, manufacturing, construction, and trucking have the highest rates of all three good job characteristics, while retail, maintenance and repair, and especially food and hospitality have the lowest rates. We show the detailed regression results used to generate these adjusted rates in Appendix Table A7.

Table 7: Adjusted rates of good job characteristics by industry

	Good wage	Stability	Benefits	Good job
Armed Forces	33.04%	96.21%	97.94%	32.62%
Public order and safety	56.16%	96.54%	87.90%	54.27%
Trucking	33.64%	89.04%	61.55%	24.76%
Construction	28.29%	83.90%	54.90%	21.45%
Maintenance and repair	18.86%	83.21%	51.85%	14.99%
Manufacturing	32.40%	89.68%	76.28%	28.70%
All other industries	34.10%	84.87%	69.61%	29.81%
Healthcare	25.97%	86.42%	74.20%	23.36%
Retail	21.92%	81.49%	64.33%	18.58%
Food and hospitality (Reference)	15.56%	72.75%	49.08%	12.05%

Working-class men ages 25-54 who worked at all in observation period.

Adjusted rates controlling for age, Hispanic ethnicity, foreign born, and region.

All differences significant at p-value < 0.05

n = 61,284

Source: Current Population Survey

We also examined the relationship between family formation rates and good job variables within the Part 3 sample. Table 8 indicates that each of the good job variables is consistently correlated with higher rates of married family formation for working-class men. Regression coefficients used to produce these adjusted rates are shown in Appendix Table A8.

Table 8: Adjusted rates of married family formation among working-class men by good job variables

Good Wage	
Yes	47.95%
No	36.06%
Stability	
Yes	40.77%
No	32.63%
Benefits	
Yes	40.75%
No	37.21%
All Three	
Yes	50.02%
No	36.09%

Working-class men ages 25-54 who worked at all in observation period.
Adjusted rates controlling for age, Hispanic ethnicity, foreign born, and region.
All differences significant at p-value < 0.05
n = 61,284
Source: Current Population Survey

Finally, we examined the extent to which the good job variables mediated the relationship between industry and married family formation rates. Table 9 shows that good job characteristics are in fact a mediator between industry and married family formation for most sectors of the economy, but the amount of difference in married family formation

rates explained by good job characteristics varies significantly across industries. The good job characteristics explain between 8-44% of the difference in married family formation between each of the industries compared to the food and hospitality industry. Regression coefficients used to produce these adjusted rates are shown in Appendix Table A6.

Table 9: Differences in married family formation rates by industry explained by good job characteristics

	Difference in married family formation rates*	Difference in family formation after controlling for good job characteristics *	Difference explained by good job variables
Armed Forces	41.28%	35.99%	12.81%
Public order and safety	25.64%	18.06%	29.55%
Trucking	15.54%	11.91%	23.35%
Construction	13.76%	11.32%	17.70%
Maintenance and repair	13.86%	12.63%	8.83%
Manufacturing	11.42%	7.39%	35.24%
All other industries	11.42%	7.78%	31.91%
Healthcare	6.76%	3.76%	44.33%
Retail	4.98%	3.13%	37.22%

Working-class men ages 25-54 who worked at all in observation period.

Adjusted rates controlling for age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, foreign born, and region

*All differences compared to "Food and hospitality"

n = 61,284

Source: Current Population Survey

Conclusion

This Institute for Family Studies report suggests that both the nature and character of men's work play a major role in determining whether men marry and form families. One big reason that working-class men are less likely to form married families seems to be that they have lower quality jobs—jobs marked by less income, less stability, and lower benefits. These findings must, however, be interpreted with caution. We do not show a direct causal relationship between good jobs and married family formation here, though we do show that having a good job is linked to men's marital and family fortunes. To wit: prime-aged men with good jobs are markedly more likely to be married with children than men in lower quality jobs. So, consistent with the broader literature on work, men, and marriage, we think that access to good jobs increases the odds that men marry and form families. [26]

Moreover, we document that differences in job quality help explain, statistically, almost 80% of the differences in the married family formation rates between working-class and college-educated men. This is a striking finding. Class differences in men's work are clearly tied to class differences in marriage and family formation. The clear implication here is that men are more likely to be married with children when they are well paid, their jobs are stable, and their benefits are good.

Moreover, among working-class men, the findings of this IFS report suggest that having a good, working-class job appears to help explain differences among working-class men in married family formation rates across industries. More concretely, the fact that sectors like public order and safety, trucking, and manufacturing often have higher pay, greater job stability, or better benefits may help explain why men in these jobs also have comparatively high levels of married family formation. Undoubtedly, the good job characteristics that are more likely to define these sectors help explain why men who serve in these jobs are the working-class men most likely to be married with children. [27] In our analysis of industries and married family formation among working-class men, our good job variables do not explain all the difference in married family formation rates

across industries among working-class men. There are likely other differences in job characteristics across the industries that we could not measure that may influence married family formation. We are particularly struck by the exceptionally high rates of family formation for men serving in the armed forces, which are not completely explained by our specific measures of good job characteristics. It may be that the military has a culture that is more friendly to marriage and family formation, or that the extra housing benefits (which we did not measure) extended to married service members make marriage more attractive to men in the military.

We also observed that healthcare, retail, and food and hospitality had lower levels of married family formation. This could be because many of these jobs are marked by erratic and unpredictable schedules that make it difficult to forge a strong and stable family. Many cities and states have attempted to alleviate this problem by legislating predictable schedules with some success.[28] Some sectors—like food and hospitality—may also be associated with a culture of late nights and substance use that is not conducive to forming strong and stable families.[29] Patterns like these undoubtedly help explain the clear differences we document between different sectors of the economy and trends in working-class men's family formation.

Likewise, we also recognize an important selection effect is likely at play in our analysis. It is possible that these findings can also be explained by the fact that men who are best able to obtain good jobs also tend to have personal traits and social skills that are consistent with the ability to find a mate and form a family.[30] Certain sectors—the armed forces, for instance—may attract and retain men who are especially reliable and responsible, and these underlying traits may also make them more attractive husbands and fathers. Moreover, working-class men are also likely to seek out better employment once they are married and have children.[31] Marriage and family motivate men to seek out certain kinds of work, as well.

In conclusion, this Institute for Family Studies report shows that men who are employed in stable, good-paying jobs with decent benefits are markedly more likely to be married with children. Given this social fact, we think that employers and policy makers should aim to increase the share of high-quality jobs to American young and middle-aged adults, even as educators and policy makers seek to increase the share of young adults who are prepared to fill these jobs. When it comes to fostering work that is both more humane and remunerative, this requires taking a page from both the progressive playbook—e.g., Seattle's Secure Scheduling Ordinance, which requires large businesses in the service sector to make workers' schedules more predictable[32]—and the conservative playbook—e.g., reducing regulatory burdens to expanded gas and oil exploration, thereby opening up more high-paying jobs in the energy sector.[33] The exceptionally high rates of marriage and family formation among working-class men serving in the military also suggest that public policies designed specifically to help married families are also worth considering. Doing all these things might very well boost the fortunes of not only American men but also American families.

Appendix

Table A1: Demographic characteristics of prime working-age men for Part 2, 2021–2024

	All men (n=113,565)	Working-class men (n=70,835)	College-educated men (n=42,730)
Age			
25-30	20.53%	21.37%	19.23%
31-35	18.07%	17.64%	18.74%
36-40	17.07%	16.62%	17.76%
41-45	16.37%	16.23%	16.58%
46-50	15.22%	15.24%	15.19%
51-55	12.74%	12.89%	12.50%
Race			
Other	3.81%	4.61%	2.57%
White	76.60%	77.53%	75.15%
Black	11.94%	13.98%	8.77%
Asian	7.65%	3.87%	13.51%
Ethnicity			
Hispanic	20.32%	26.56%	10.62%
Nativity			
Foreign Born	22.16%	22.43%	21.76%
Region			
New England	4.45%	3.83%	5.41%
Middle Atlantic	12.13%	10.80%	14.20%
East North Central	14.01%	14.34%	13.51%
West North Central	6.47%	6.72%	6.08%
South Atlantic	19.69%	19.66%	19.74%
East South Central	5.72%	6.54%	4.44%
West South Central	12.46%	13.37%	11.05%
Mountain	7.86%	7.95%	7.72%
Pacific	17.20%	16.79%	17.85%

Married family formation	40.13%	36.50%	45.77%
Good job variables			
Good pay	39.93%	24.93%	63.26%
Benefits	68.73%	59.07%	83.74%
Stability	77.65%	72.65%	85.42%
All three	35.41%	21.09%	57.69%

Source: Current Population Survey

Sample: All men ages 25-54

N: See column headers

Table A2: Demographic characteristics of prime working-age, working-class men who were employed at least part of the year for Part 3, 2021-2024

Age	
25-30	21.44%
31-35	17.98%
36-40	16.88%
41-45	16.26%
46-50	15.24%
51-55	12.20%
Race	
Other	4.38%
White	78.87%
Black	12.91%
Asian	3.84%
Ethnicity	
Hispanic	27.49%
Nativity	
Foreign Born	23.44%
Region	
New England	3.78%
Middle Atlantic	10.64%
East North Central	14.32%
West North Central	7.04%
South Atlantic	19.52%
East South Central	6.32%
West South Central	13.49%
Mountain	8.19%
Pacific	16.69%
Major industry	
Other	30.20%
Manufacturing	14.27%
Retail	11.02%

Construction	18.57%
Healthcare	3.74%
Food and hospitality	8.09%
Maintenance	7.50%
Trucking	3.26%
Public order and safety	2.39%
Armed Forces	0.96%
Married family formation	39.51%
Good job variables	
Good pay	28.99%
Benefits	64.87%
Stability	84.48%
All three	24.52%

Source: Current Population Survey
Sample: Working-class men ages 25-54 who worked at all in observation period
N=61,284

Table A3: Detailed regression results of the relationship between class and married family formation

	Model 1: Without good job variables			Model 2: With good job variables		
	Coefficient	StE	Pvalue	Coefficient	StE	Pvalue
Class (ref: working class)	0.083	0.003	0.000	0.018	0.004	0.000
Good Jobs Variables						
Good pay	N/A			0.114	0.004	0.000
Benefits	N/A			0.103	0.004	0.000
Stability	N/A			0.057	0.004	0.000
Age (ref: 25-30)						
31-35	0.201	0.005	0.000	0.182	0.005	0.000
36-40	0.328	0.005	0.000	0.301	0.005	0.000
41-45	0.383	0.005	0.000	0.354	0.005	0.000
46-50	0.371	0.005	0.000	0.339	0.005	0.000
51-55	0.277	0.005	0.000	0.250	0.005	0.000
Race (ref: other)						
White	0.057	0.008	0.000	0.039	0.008	0.000
Black	-0.062	0.009	0.000	-0.052	0.009	0.000
Asian	0.031	0.010	0.001	0.011	0.010	0.248
Hispanic (ref: not Hispanic)	-0.013	0.005	0.004	0.005	0.004	0.305
Foreign born (ref: not foreign born)	0.105	0.005	0.000	0.122	0.005	0.000
Region (ref: New England)						
Middle Atlantic	0.001	0.008	0.894	0.006	0.008	0.403
East North Central	0.044	0.008	0.000	0.046	0.007	0.000
West North Central	0.058	0.008	0.000	0.056	0.008	0.000
South Atlantic	0.012	0.007	0.100	0.015	0.007	0.030
East South Central	0.037	0.009	0.000	0.046	0.009	0.000
West South Central	0.045	0.008	0.000	0.049	0.008	0.000
Mountain	0.025	0.008	0.001	0.026	0.008	0.001
Pacific	-0.009	0.007	0.221	-0.005	0.007	0.504
Constant	0.042	0.010	0.000	-0.072	0.010	0.000

Source: Current Population Survey

Sample: All men ages 25-54

Note: StE=Standard error

N=113,565

Table A4: Detailed regression results of the relationship between class and good job characteristics

	Good Wage			Stability			Benefits			Good Job		
	Coeffi cient	StE	Pvalue	Coeffi cient	StE	Pvalue	Coeffi cient	StE	Pvalue	Coeffi cient	StE	Pvalue
Class (ref: working class)	0.352	0.003	0.000	0.125	0.003	0.000	0.220	0.003	0.000	0.335	0.003	0.000
Age (ref: 25-30)												
31-35	0.104	0.005	0.000	0.054	0.005	0.000	0.032	0.005	0.000	0.096	0.005	0.000
36-40	0.155	0.005	0.000	0.063	0.005	0.000	0.050	0.005	0.000	0.146	0.005	0.000
41-45	0.174	0.005	0.000	0.063	0.005	0.000	0.047	0.005	0.000	0.160	0.005	0.000
46-50	0.186	0.005	0.000	0.060	0.005	0.000	0.074	0.005	0.000	0.173	0.005	0.000
51-55	0.172	0.006	0.000	0.032	0.005	0.000	0.067	0.006	0.000	0.162	0.006	0.000
Race (ref: other)												
White	0.063	0.007	0.000	0.070	0.008	0.000	0.051	0.008	0.000	0.053	0.007	0.000
Black	-0.056	0.009	0.000	-0.022	0.009	0.016	-0.008	0.010	0.427	-0.054	0.008	0.000
Asian	0.092	0.010	0.000	0.043	0.010	0.000	0.091	0.010	0.000	0.088	0.009	0.000
Hispanic (ref: not Hispanic)	-0.101	0.004	0.000	0.001	0.004	0.894	-0.106	0.005	0.000	-0.095	0.004	0.000
Foreign born (ref: not foreign born)	-0.074	0.004	0.000	0.012	0.004	0.005	-0.165	0.005	0.000	-0.086	0.004	0.000
Region (ref: New England)												
Middle Atlantic	-0.020	0.008	0.013	-0.015	0.007	0.046	-0.029	0.008	0.000	-0.022	0.008	0.005
East North Central	-0.028	0.008	0.000	0.008	0.007	0.259	0.009	0.007	0.206	-0.030	0.008	0.000
West North Central	-0.035	0.008	0.000	0.046	0.007	0.000	0.028	0.008	0.000	-0.035	0.008	0.000
South Atlantic	-0.039	0.007	0.000	0.021	0.007	0.001	-0.022	0.007	0.002	-0.046	0.007	0.000
East South Central	-0.085	0.009	0.000	0.018	0.008	0.020	-0.027	0.008	0.001	-0.085	0.008	0.000
West South Central	-0.030	0.008	0.000	0.016	0.007	0.020	-0.037	0.007	0.000	-0.041	0.008	0.000
Mountain	-0.012	0.008	0.141	0.012	0.007	0.084	-0.010	0.007	0.177	-0.028	0.008	0.000
Pacific	-0.005	0.007	0.512	-0.027	0.007	0.000	-0.013	0.007	0.066	-0.014	0.007	0.052
Constant	0.153	0.010	0.000	0.621	0.010	0.000	0.586	0.010	0.000	0.138	0.010	0.000

Source: Current Population Survey

Sample: All men ages 25-54

Note: StE=Standard error

N=113,565

Table A5: Detailed regression results of relationship between married family formation and good job characteristics

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Coefficient	StE	Pvalue	Coefficient	StE	Pvalue
Good Job Variables						
Good pay	0.119	0.004	0.000	N/A		
Benefits	0.103	0.004	0.000	N/A		
Stability	0.059	0.004	0.000	N/A		
Good Job	N/A			0.169	0.003	0.000
Age (ref: 25-30)						
31-35	0.182	0.005	0.000	0.186	0.005	0.000
36-40	0.301	0.005	0.000	0.305	0.005	0.000
41-45	0.353	0.005	0.000	0.356	0.005	0.000
46-50	0.338	0.005	0.000	0.342	0.005	0.000
51-55	0.249	0.005	0.000	0.249	0.005	0.000
Race (ref: other)						
White	0.041	0.008	0.000	0.051	0.008	0.000
Black	-0.052	0.009	0.000	-0.053	0.009	0.000
Asian	0.016	0.010	0.100	0.026	0.010	0.008
Hispanic (ref: not Hispanic)	0.002	0.004	0.705	-0.003	0.004	0.462
Foreign born (ref: not foreign born)	0.123	0.005	0.000	0.120	0.005	0.000
Region (ref: New England)						
Middle Atlantic	0.006	0.008	0.401	0.005	0.008	0.558
East North Central	0.044	0.007	0.000	0.046	0.008	0.000
West North Central	0.054	0.008	0.000	0.061	0.008	0.000
South Atlantic	0.015	0.007	0.036	0.018	0.007	0.010
East South Central	0.044	0.009	0.000	0.047	0.009	0.000
West South Central	0.048	0.008	0.000	0.050	0.008	0.000
Mountain	0.025	0.008	0.001	0.028	0.008	0.000
Pacific	-0.005	0.007	0.451	-0.007	0.007	0.290
Constant	-0.069	0.010	0.000	0.029	0.010	0.003

Source: Current Population Survey

Sample: All men ages 25-54

Note: StE=Standard error

N=113,565

Table A6: Detailed regression results of the relationship between industry and married family formation

	Model 1: Without good job variables			Model 2: With good job variables		
	Coefficient	StE	Pvalue	Coefficient	StE	Pvalue
Industry (re: food and hospitality)						
Manufacturing	0.114	0.009	0.000	0.074	0.009	0.000
Retail	0.050	0.009	0.000	0.031	0.009	0.001
Construction	0.138	0.009	0.000	0.113	0.009	0.000
Healthcare	0.068	0.013	0.000	0.038	0.013	0.003
Food and hospitality	0.139	0.011	0.000	0.126	0.011	0.000
Maintenance and repair	0.155	0.014	0.000	0.119	0.014	0.000
Trucking	0.256	0.016	0.000	0.181	0.017	0.000
Public order and safety	0.413	0.024	0.000	0.360	0.024	0.000
Armed Forces	0.114	0.008	0.000	0.078	0.008	0.000
Good Job Variables						
Good pay	N/A			0.112	0.005	0.000
Benefits	N/A			0.073	0.006	0.000
Stability	N/A			0.033	0.005	0.000
Age (ref: 25-30)						
31-35	0.185	0.007	0.000	0.173	0.007	0.000
36-40	0.252	0.007	0.000	0.233	0.007	0.000
41-45	0.300	0.007	0.000	0.277	0.007	0.000
46-50	0.293	0.007	0.000	0.266	0.007	0.000
51-55	0.196	0.008	0.000	0.167	0.008	0.000
Race (ref: other)						
White	0.047	0.010	0.000	0.039	0.010	0.000
Black	-0.064	0.012	0.000	-0.056	0.012	0.000
Asian	0.042	0.015	0.006	0.039	0.015	0.009
Hispanic (ref: not Hispanic)	-0.011	0.006	0.063	0.003	0.006	0.655
Foreign born (ref: not foreign born)	0.120	0.007	0.000	0.139	0.007	0.000
Region (ref: New England)						
Middle Atlantic	0.008	0.012	0.493	0.014	0.011	0.233

East North Central	0.043	0.011	0.000	0.047	0.011	0.000
West North Central	0.045	0.012	0.000	0.049	0.012	0.000
South Atlantic	0.020	0.010	0.058	0.023	0.010	0.023
East South Central	0.050	0.012	0.000	0.059	0.012	0.000
West South Central	0.050	0.011	0.000	0.056	0.011	0.000
Mountain	0.034	0.011	0.002	0.036	0.011	0.001
Pacific	0.020	0.010	0.052	0.021	0.010	0.039
Constant	0.006	0.015	0.674	-0.070	0.015	0.000

Source: Current Population Survey

Sample: Working-class men aged 25-54 who worked at all in observation period.

Note: StE=Standard error

N=61,284

Table A7: Detailed regression results of the relationship between industry and good job characteristics

	Good Wage			Stability			Benefits			Good Job		
	Coeffi cient	StE	Pvalue	Coeffi cient	StE	Pvalue	Coeffi cient	StE	Pvalue	Coeffi cient	StE	Pvalue
Industry (re: food and hospitality)												
Manufacturing	-0.017	0.007	0.015	0.048	0.005	0.000	0.067	0.006	0.000	-0.011	0.007	0.102
Retail	-0.122	0.007	0.000	-0.034	0.007	0.000	-0.053	0.008	0.000	-0.112	0.007	0.000
Construction	-0.058	0.006	0.000	-0.010	0.005	0.057	-0.147	0.006	0.000	-0.084	0.006	0.000
Healthcare	-0.081	0.011	0.000	0.015	0.009	0.092	0.046	0.011	0.000	-0.065	0.011	0.000
Food and hospitality	-0.185	0.007	0.000	-0.121	0.008	0.000	-0.205	0.009	0.000	-0.178	0.007	0.000
Maintenance and repair	-0.152	0.008	0.000	-0.017	0.007	0.022	-0.178	0.009	0.000	-0.148	0.007	0.000
Trucking	-0.005	0.013	0.726	0.042	0.009	0.000	-0.081	0.013	0.000	-0.050	0.012	0.000
Public order and safety	0.221	0.015	0.000	0.117	0.006	0.000	0.183	0.009	0.000	0.245	0.015	0.000
Armed Forces	-0.011	0.022	0.630	0.113	0.012	0.000	0.283	0.007	0.000	0.028	0.022	0.199
Age (ref: 25-30)												
31-35	0.079	0.006	0.000	0.034	0.006	0.000	0.028	0.007	0.000	0.073	0.006	0.000
36-40	0.130	0.007	0.000	0.045	0.006	0.000	0.055	0.007	0.000	0.124	0.006	0.000
41-45	0.149	0.007	0.000	0.057	0.006	0.000	0.060	0.007	0.000	0.140	0.006	0.000
46-50	0.173	0.007	0.000	0.061	0.006	0.000	0.099	0.007	0.000	0.167	0.007	0.000
51-55	0.183	0.008	0.000	0.062	0.006	0.000	0.113	0.008	0.000	0.172	0.007	0.000
Race (ref: other)												
White	0.044	0.009	0.000	0.029	0.009	0.001	0.038	0.010	0.000	0.031	0.009	0.001
Black	-0.062	0.011	0.000	-0.018	0.010	0.077	0.009	0.012	0.470	-0.061	0.010	0.000
Asian	0.002	0.014	0.904	0.011	0.013	0.369	0.042	0.015	0.006	-0.006	0.013	0.661
Hispanic (ref: not Hispanic)	-0.094	0.006	0.000	-0.002	0.005	0.692	-0.096	0.006	0.000	-0.084	0.005	0.000
Foreign born (ref: not foreign born)	-0.103	0.006	0.000	-0.010	0.005	0.060	-0.219	0.007	0.000	-0.111	0.005	0.000
Region (ref: New England)												
Middle Atlantic	-0.026	0.012	0.024	-0.016	0.010	0.111	-0.050	0.012	0.000	-0.033	0.011	0.003
East North Central	-0.038	0.011	0.000	0.001	0.009	0.879	-0.014	0.011	0.195	-0.041	0.010	0.000
West North Central	-0.043	0.012	0.000	0.019	0.009	0.048	-0.004	0.011	0.737	-0.040	0.011	0.000
South Atlantic	-0.043	0.010	0.000	0.032	0.009	0.000	-0.037	0.010	0.000	-0.046	0.010	0.000
East South Central	-0.088	0.012	0.000	0.032	0.010	0.001	-0.051	0.012	0.000	-0.081	0.011	0.000
West South Central	-0.035	0.011	0.001	0.011	0.009	0.221	-0.070	0.011	0.000	-0.047	0.010	0.000

Mountain	-0.008	0.011	0.445	0.004	0.009	0.658	-0.029	0.011	0.009	-0.022	0.011	0.035
Pacific	0.006	0.010	0.541	-0.018	0.009	0.038	-0.016	0.010	0.118	-0.006	0.010	0.544
Constant	0.285	0.014	0.000	0.784	0.012	0.000	0.721	0.014	0.000	0.263	0.013	0.000

Source: Current Population Survey

Sample: Working-class men ages 25-54 who worked at all in observation period.

Note: StE=Standard error

N=61,284

Table A8: Detailed regression results of relationship between married family formation and good job characteristics

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Coefficient	StE	Pvalue	Coefficient	StE	Pvalue
Good Job Variables						
Good pay	0.1188474	0.01	0	N/A		
Benefits	0.0814426	0.01	0	N/A		
Stability	0.0354273	0	0	N/A		
Good Job	N/A			0.1392532	0.005417	0
Age (ref: 25-30)						
31-35	0.1758369	0.01	0	0.1790507	0.006586	0
36-40	0.2347781	0.01	0	0.2389003	0.006769	0
41-45	0.2795255	0.01	0	0.2848591	0.006955	0
46-50	0.2663534	0.01	0	0.2728306	0.007175	0
51-55	0.1664298	0.01	0	0.1738798	0.007662	0
		0.005	0.000			
Race (ref: other)						
White	0.0415991	0.01	0	0.0464973	0.010307	0
Black	-0.059169	0.01	0	-0.058988	0.011843	0
Asian	0.025544	0.02	0.089	0.0286218	0.015071	0.058
Hispanic (ref: not Hispanic)	0.0043679	0.01	0.469	0.0008087	0.006035	0.893
Foreign born (ref: not foreign born)	0.1442864	0.01	0	0.1382691	0.006503	0
Region (ref: New England)						
Middle Atlantic	0.0100247	0.01	0.386	0.008134	0.011606	0.483
East North Central	0.0453815	0.01	0	0.0468199	0.010987	0
West North Central	0.0481297	0.01	0	0.0504294	0.011681	0
South Atlantic	0.0262281	0.01	0.011	0.0286999	0.010403	0.006
East South Central	0.0614423	0.01	0	0.0637963	0.012097	0
West South Central	0.0565154	0.01	0	0.0573006	0.010855	0
Mountain	0.0338701	0.01	0.002	0.0348547	0.01116	0.002
Pacific	0.0199717	0.01	0.056	0.0192768	0.010488	0.066
Constant	-0.003617	0.01	0.802	0.0819578	0.013727	0

Source: Current Population Survey

Sample: Working-class men aged 25-54 who worked at all in observation period.

Note: StE=Standard error

N=61,284

Endnotes:

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