

Relationship breakdown - the real cost

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Separation leaves men feeling isolated and women experiencing greater levels of poverty, according to a leading researcher at The University of Queensland (UQ).

An extensive, study looking at the immediate and long-term financial and social impacts of a break-up, has shown that [women](#) end up relatively worse off in terms of income four years after separation, while men are financial stable but experience an increase in [loneliness](#).

“Separation has an enormous impact on both men and women,” said Professor David de Vaus, Executive Dean of UQ's Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences and co-author of the study.

“Although women suffer persisting financial loss after separation, their [mental health](#) recovers much better than men's,” he said.

The study - *Relationship breakdown and [social exclusion](#): A longitudinal analysis* - looks at a sample of around 14,000 people and their situation two years before a separation and up to four years after.

Co-authored by researchers from The University of Queensland, the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Australian National University, this study identified that 57% of separated women experienced a loss in income the year immediately following separation.

“Divorce has a short-term and medium-term effect and, financially, women take a long-term hit,” said Professor de Vaus.

Although women experience damage financially the study found that there was a noticeable increase in their social support network, where as men suffered emotionally, with a sharp drop in [life satisfaction](#).

In the year following separation, 48% of men who were still single continued to feel very lonely compared to 39% of women who remained single.

However, four years after separation men were almost as happy as they had been in the final year of their marriage.

The study also found that separation is more probable among couples who are not doing so well to start with.

Professor de Vaus has presented these findings at the 2010 Australian Institute of Families Studies conference being held in Melbourne this week.

The research paper is co-written by Matthew Gray, Lixia Qu and David Stanton.

Provided by University of Queensland

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