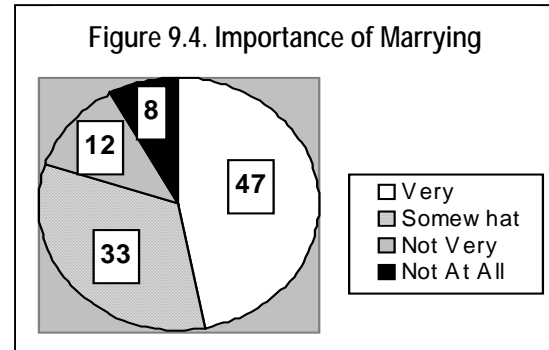


## The Ongoing Popularity of Marriage

Source: Reginald W. Bibby, *The Boomer Factor*, 2006:164.

**Marriage continues to be highly valued by most Canadians.** Some 8 in 10 people say getting married in their lifetime is something that either is “very important” or “somewhat important”. Less than 1 in 10 indicate it is “not important at all.”

Consistent with Statistics Canada findings, some 60% of our *Future Families Project* participants told us that they have been married once. Another 7% said they have been married more than once, and around 1% three times or more. The remaining 32% of Canadians, mostly younger adults, to date have not married – at least not yet.



Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 27.

The intriguing question, given that marriage in Canada and elsewhere certainly has had its collective ups and downs for a long time, is **why do people want to get married?** And why do those who have had their marriages end in divorce want to get married *again*?

We put the question to the 80% of Canadians who place importance on getting married at some stage in their lives. They point to three primary reasons: the belief that marriage signifies commitment, their moral values, and the belief that children should have married parents. There is little difference in the ranking of these three motives for marrying by either gender or age. But the third factor – believing children should have married parents – is not as important to Quebecers as it is to people in the rest of the country (63% versus 81%).

Somewhat smaller majorities of about 6 in 10 Canadians say that marriage was or is “just the natural thing to do,” that financial security is an important consideration, and that religious beliefs have been a motivating factor.

Of course, there are some very clear emotional and psychological reasons why we marry that go beyond our being quite as rational about marriage as the reasons we’ve just looked at imply. When we gave Canadians an opportunity, in open-ended fashion, to simply tell us “**one thing**” they like about marriage,” what they had to say was revealing and important.

**Five major factors** were mentioned.

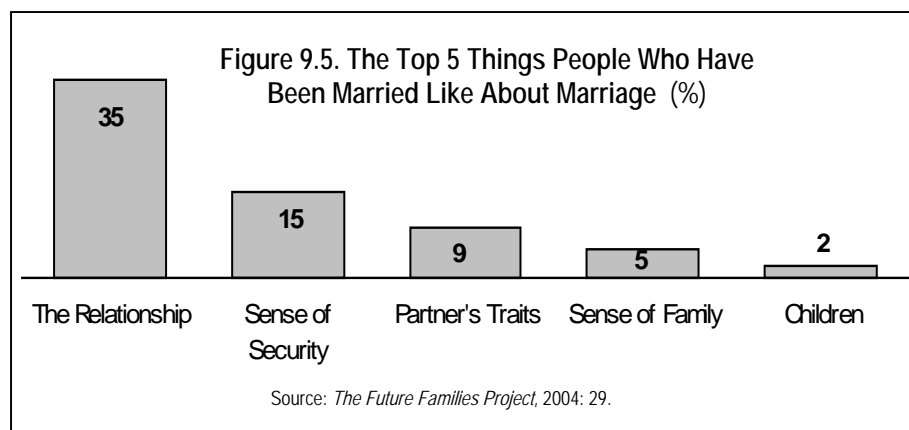
First and easily foremost, the relationship itself, complete with characteristics such as companionship, acceptance, love and support.

Second, a sense of security that also brings stability to one's life.

Third, the unique characteristics of one's partner, including such traits as commitment, trust, reliability, and humour.

Fourth, the sense of family one experiences, versus being individuals only.

Fifth, children – valuing them and feeling that everyone is enriched by their presence.



Back in the early 1970s, on the heels of the sexual revolution, there were a fair number of family experts who wondered aloud whether or not marriage had any future. These days, the future of marriage is not in doubt. The only question for most Canadians is who and when – or, when and who.