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THE CENTRE FOR  
**SOCIAL  
JUSTICE**

## **PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

# **Lone parents tally heads for two million as numbers rise 20,000 a year, says CSJ report**

*Around one million children grow up with no contact with their father*

*Many are in “men deserts” and have no male role model in sight*

*Prime Minister urged to get a grip and finally deliver on his pledge to tackle family breakdown*

*The tragedy of family break-up is devastating children, parents and communities*

Lone parent families are increasing at a rate of more than 20,000 a year and will total more than two million by the time of the next election, according to a major new report accusing the Government of turning a blind eye to its commitment to promote family stability.

The report, to be published in full this week (w/c 10<sup>th</sup> June), also finds that at least one million children are growing up without a father and that some of the poorest parts of the country have become “men deserts” because so few primary schools have male teachers.

Across England one in four state primary schools have no full-time qualified male teacher, and 80 per cent of state-educated boys are in primary schools with three or fewer full-time qualified male teachers.<sup>1</sup>

Father absence is linked to higher rates of teenage crime, pregnancy and disadvantage, the report warns.

In a foreword to the report, titled: ‘Fractured Families: why stability matters’, from the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), Director Christian Guy warns of the “tsunami” of family breakdown battering the country.

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<sup>1</sup> Amended at 10.30am on 17.06.13 from “Across England and Wales, one in four primary schools has no male teacher and 80 per cent have fewer than three.”

He says the human, social and financial costs are “devastating” for children and adults alike. Yet faced with this national “emergency”, the response from politicians of the Left and the Right has been “feeble”.

Mr Guy comments: “There are many misguided reasons for such political paralysis. Some argue that it is no business of politicians to meddle in the personal family choices people make. Others suggest that rising family breakdown is just a modern process, an inevitable trait of human advancement. Others say family instability doesn’t matter...

“This has to change. Our political discourse about family policy must mature. Family breakdown is an urgent public health issue. Backing commitment and setting a goal of reducing instability does not equate to criticising or stigmatising lone parents or those involved.

“Within this need for new maturity, we should also agree that marriage is not a right wing obsession but a social justice issue: people throughout society want to marry but the cultural and financial barriers faced by those in the poorest communities thwart their aspirations.”

The report features “league tables” showing the parts of the country (Lower Layer Super Output Areas, which have an average population of 1,614) where fatherless and lone parent households are most prevalent.

In one neighbourhood in the Riverside ward of Liverpool, there is no father present in 65 per cent of households with dependent children. Liverpool has eight out of the country’s top 20 areas with the highest levels of fatherless households.

There are 236 LSOAs in England and Wales where more than 50 per cent of households with dependent children are headed by a lone mother.

An area in the Manor Castle ward of Sheffield tops the lone parent league table - among households with dependent children, 75 per cent are headed by a lone parent (most commonly a woman). Second comes the same Riverside neighbourhood in Liverpool (71 per cent). Five Liverpool neighbourhoods are in the top 20 nationally for lone parent households.

Mr Guy adds: “For children growing up in some of the poorest parts of the country, men are rarely encountered in the home or in the classroom. This is an ignored form of deprivation that can have profoundly damaging consequences on social and mental development.

“There are ‘men deserts’ in many parts of our towns and cities and we urgently need to wake up to what is going wrong.”

The CSJ report recalls David Cameron’s election pledge to lead the “most family-

friendly Government ever”. Yet, in power, the family stability agenda “has barely been mentioned”. Comprehensive action to tackle existing policy barriers to family stability “has been almost entirely absent”, it adds.

The report also highlights the cost to the taxpayer of soaring rates of family breakdown. The total cost is estimated at £46 billion a year or £1541 for every taxpayer in the country. This figure has risen by nearly a quarter in the last four years and on current trends, the cost of family breakdown is projected to hit £49 billion by the end of this Parliament.

The CSJ report condemns the lack of Government action to stem the epidemic of family breakdown. For every £6,000 spent on picking up the pieces after a split, just £1 is spent on helping to keep families together.

The research also finds that it is the instability of cohabiting couples rather than a surge in divorce rates that is fuelling the disintegration of the UK family. Since 1996, the number of people cohabiting has doubled to nearly 6 million.

Cohabiting parents are three times more likely to separate by the time a child is aged five than married couples, the report states.

The high break-up rates among cohabiting couples are driving up the numbers of lone parents. These increased by almost a quarter between 1996 and 2012 and now account for nearly two million adults, mostly women. One quarter of all families with dependent children are now headed by a lone parent as Britain experiences one of the highest rates of family breakdown in the developed world.

The report also highlights how family breakdown is causing additional strain on housing markets; both in social housing – where availability is already stretched – and private housing.

On the Government’s troubled families scheme, the report criticises the deadline of 2015 as arbitrary and calls for a longer term cross-party commitment to be reached on helping these families. It also states that the process for identifying families has been poor and a CSJ FoI request revealed that less than 16.5 per cent of all the families identified so far meet all three of the set criteria of youth crime or anti-social behaviour, truancing, and an adult on out-of-work benefits.

**Lone Parents**

2011 lower layer super output area (LSOA)	Ward	% of households with dependent children headed by single parent

Sheffield 075G	Manor Castle	75%
Liverpool 050J	Riverside	71%
Birmingham I38C	Ladywood	70%
Wirral 011C	Bidston and St James	70%
Bristol 054B	Lawrence Hill	67%
Liverpool 038C	Wavertree	66%
Knowsley 008B	Stockbridge	65%
Gosport 008G	Town	65%
Liverpool 022D	Kirkdale	64%
Liverpool 012C	County	64%
Knowsley 006B	Stockbridge	63%
County Durham 025B	Easington	63%
Birmingham I21B	Brandwood	63%
Bristol 023G	Ashley	63%
Liverpool 012A	County	63%
Middlesbrough 004C	Pallister	62%
Wirral 008C	Seacombe	62%
Bath and North East Somerset 009C	Kingsmead	62%
Camden 024B	King's Cross	62%
Cardiff 013D	Trowbridge	62%

### **Single Mother households**

<b>2011 lower layer super output area (LSOA)</b>	<b>Ward</b>	<b>% of households with dependent children headed by single mother</b>
Liverpool 050J	Riverside	65%
Birmingham I38C	Ladywood	63%
Wirral 011C	Bidston and St James	63%
Camden 024B	King's Cross	62%
Liverpool 038C	Wavertree	60%
Middlesbrough 004C	Pallister	60%
Cardiff 013D	Trowbridge	59%
Liverpool 006C	Warbreck	59%
Liverpool 022D	Kirkdale	59%
Cardiff 039E	Ely	59%
Liverpool 014A	Kirkdale	58%
Birmingham 022B	Kingstanding	58%
Nottingham 005C	Bulwell	58%
Wirral 011D	Bidston and St James	58%

Gosport 008G	Town	58%
Liverpool 024C	Everton	58%
Knowsley 006B	Stockbridge	58%
Liverpool 012A	County	58%
Knowsley 008B	Stockbridge	57%
Liverpool 012C	County	57%

For media inquiries, please contact Ross Reid from the Centre for Social Justice on 07780 707322 or Nick Wood of Media Intelligence Partners Ltd on 07889 617003.

Christian Guy, Director of the Centre for Social Justice, is available for interview.

**ENDS**

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

**The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ)** is an independent think tank established in 2004 to put social justice at the heart of British politics.

In 2007 the CSJ published its landmark report, *Breakthrough Britain*. This publication, which set out 190 evidence-based policy recommendations to tackle poverty in Britain, transformed the social policy and political landscape and was awarded Publication of the Year by *Prospect* Magazine in 2008.

Since *Breakthrough Britain* the CSJ has published over 40 reports which have shaped government policy and influenced opposition parties. These have included the seminal papers *Dying To Belong* and *Dynamic Benefits*, which has led the Coalition Government's welfare reforms.

Further to this, the CSJ manages an Alliance of over 300 of the most effective grass roots, poverty-fighting organisations.

The CSJ is able to draw upon the expertise and experience of Alliance charities for research work and media inquiries. Journalists wishing to conduct grass-roots research into social problems can be put in touch with front-line charity directors and staff.