

The Centre for Social Justice  
11 Belgrave Road  
London SW1V 1RB

Telephone [020 7592 1160](tel:02075921160)  
Website [www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk](http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk)

Release date: Embargoed until Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2012

The logo for The Centre for Social Justice, featuring the text 'THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE' in white, uppercase letters on a dark red rectangular background.

**PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**  
**RELEASE TIME: IMMEDIATE**

## **Marriage's fall from grace a key cause of social breakdown, warns British public**

***Landmark poll comes as CSJ prepares to launch major new policy inquiry - Breakthrough Britain II***

Family breakdown and the decline in the importance of marriage are cited by the public as key causes of the serious social problems facing Britain, according to a new opinion poll.

The survey found that 55 per cent of people – the equivalent of 25 million people across the land – say at least one of their local communities is plagued by broken families, crime and poor schools.

Some 60 per cent say that over the last few decades, marriage has become less important to society and that is having a damaging effect on the country.

And with 89 per cent agreement, the public identifies better parenting and stronger families as the key to mending the broken society.

But while the poll implies that the Government has plenty of work to do to resolve deep-seated social problems, it does find overwhelming support for its welfare reforms.

Some 85 per cent say that work is the only reliable route out of poverty and a similar number say that a life on benefits should not be an option. Support for these propositions comes from across the social classes.

The YouGov survey was commissioned by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), a leading independent think-tank, which is preparing to launch Breakthrough Britain II, a new forensic examination of the social fabric of the nation which will report back ahead of the next general election.

Cabinet minister Oliver Letwin, responsible for the development of Government policy, will speak at the unveiling of the next phase of the CSJ's work at I am at One Great George Street, London, on Thursday, November 29.

The new study, which will run until 2014, will explore the fundamental causes of poverty and social breakdown, which the CSJ has identified as welfare dependency, family breakdown, educational failure, drug and alcohol addiction and serious personal debt. The CSJ, a great champion of small grassroots charities, will also press for a bigger role for the voluntary sector in tackling disadvantage.

Christian Guy, Managing Director of the CSJ, said: "The original Breakthrough Britain report was a turning point in our understanding of the causes of deprivation. We travelled the length and breadth of the UK, took evidence from over 2,000 organisations in 3,000 hours of public hearings and visited other countries to ensure this study was the most comprehensive ever done.

"It challenged the tired arguments that poverty was about income alone and provided a host of robust solutions to improve communities and allow people to fulfil their potential.

"It has influenced cross-party thinking and the CSJ looks forward to building a new policy consensus that will enable us to make further inroads on poverty in the years to come.

"As we have discovered to our cost as a nation, simply throwing more money at social problems is not enough and can even be counter-productive.

"We have to give people every chance to change their lives and acquire the tools that will enable them to support themselves, their families and the wider community.

"As before, we have brought together a genuine team of experts with frontline poverty-fighting experience to help us draw up a new social policy blueprint to tackle the challenges of the 21st Century."

Breakthrough Britain, which was commissioned by David Cameron, was published in July 2007 and had a profound impact on the Conservative manifesto at the election of 2010.

It has since helped to shape Coalition social policy, most notably in the area of welfare reform, where its call for a benefits system that incentivises work has been at the heart of the changes made by Iain Duncan Smith, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with the introduction of universal credit from next April.

Many of the radical reforms Education Secretary Michael Gove is implementing – including the expansion of academies and giving more powers to head teachers – can be traced back to Breakthrough Britain.

The recognition of marriage in the tax system through the introduction of transferrable tax allowances between husband and wife was another key recommendation of the original CSJ report.

This is in the Coalition agreement between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats but has yet to be implemented - a measure that the CSJ is continuing to advocate strongly.

### **Appendix:**

Pollsters YouGov, on behalf the Centre for Social Justice, asked a series of questions to a sample size of 1722 British adults during the period November 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> 2012:

**1.) Thinking about where you live and other towns or villages nearby, are there areas where there are widespread serious social problems like broken families, poor schools and crime?**

- A.) "There are many areas near where I live where there are serious social problems" – 13 per cent agreed
- B.) "There are several areas near where I live where there are serious social problems" – 42 per cent agreed
- C.) "There are hardly any areas near where I live where there are serious social problems" – 29 per cent agreed
- D.) "There are no areas near where I live where there are serious social problems" – 7 per cent agreed
- E.) "Don't know" – 9 per cent agreed

**2.) Which of the following do you think is the MOST important for children to have when growing up?**

- A.) "A safe community and environment" – 46 per cent agreed
- B.) "Having two parents at home" – 31 per cent agreed
- C.) "Having enough money" – 6 per cent agreed
- D.) "A place at a good school" – 6 per cent agreed
- E.) "Friends" – 4 per cent agreed
- F.) "Other" – 5 per cent agreed
- G.) "Don't know" – 2 per cent agreed

**3.) Over the last few decades, do you think marriage has become less important in society?**

- A.) "Yes – marriage has become less important and this is a bad thing" – 60 per cent agreed
- B.) "Yes – marriage has become less important, but this is a good thing" – 19 per cent agreed
- C.) "No – marriage has not become any less important and this is a good thing" – 10 per cent agreed
- D.) "No – marriage has not become any less important and this is a bad thing" – 2 per cent agreed
- E.) "Don't know" – 9 per cent agreed

**4.) “If we want to have any hope of mending our broken society, family and parenting is where we’ve got to start”**

- A.) Strongly agree – 52 per cent
- B.) Tend to agree – 37 per cent
- C.) Tend to disagree – 5 per cent
- D.) Strongly disagree – 1 per cent
- E.) Don’t know – 6 per cent

**5.) “Work is the only reliable route out of poverty”**

- A.) Strongly agree – 38 per cent
- B.) Tend to agree – 47 per cent
- C.) Tend to disagree – 8 per cent
- D.) Strongly disagree – 1 per cent
- E.) Don’t know – 5 per cent

**6.) “People who can work shouldn’t be able to choose a life on welfare”**

- A.) Strongly agree – 59 per cent
- B.) Tend to agree – 27 per cent
- C.) Tend to disagree – 5 per cent
- D.) Strongly disagree – 2 per cent
- E.) Don’t know – 7 per cent

For media inquiries, please contact Nick Wood of Media Intelligence Partners Ltd on 07889 617003 or 0203 008 8146 or Ross Reid, CSJ Communications Officer, on 07780 707322.

**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.