

## Why we should support the family

Iain Duncan Smith: The State of the Nation report Dec 2006

I believe that strong families and strong communities are at the heart of the welfare society. From the cradle to the grave, we depend upon families and not enough is being done by Government to strengthen family life. I call upon us all to address the challenges of family breakdown in a responsible way and prevent the demise of the welfare society.

The family is where the vast majority of us learn the fundamental skills for life; physically, emotionally and socially it is the context from which the rest of life flows. However family life in Britain is changing such that adults and children today are increasingly faced with the challenges of dysfunctional, fractured, or fatherless families. This is especially the case in the least advantaged sections of society but these trends also profoundly affect people across the socioeconomic spectrum.

The policy-making community (which includes politicians, policy-makers and academics) has been markedly reluctant to grasp the nettle of family breakdown by being clear about the benefits of marriage and committed relationships, and the merits of supporting and encouraging them....

One of the most important factors implicated in poverty and a low sense of well-being is the issue of family breakdown yet in this area, perhaps more than in any other, politicians, policy-makers and academics *inter alia*, are aware of their own frailty. Many of their own families have endured dissolution and other forms of breakdown, and they are understandably determined not to moralise. They are also reluctant to support an institution which may not have served them well, either because their own parents parted or because their own marriages and partnerships have faltered.....

For this reason we urge readers of this report to lay to one side their own experience and consider the evidence-based case we make for meeting the challenge of family breakdown....

Children's welfare is tightly bound up with the quality of their parents' relationships and they are, often, the most vulnerable when families break down....

Family breakdown, in all its forms, is occurring at a greater rate today than ever before. Family stability has been in continuous decline for four decades and that is why we have felt the need to look so closely at the causes and consequences of this trend for society.

***The State of the Nation Report Dec 2006***

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"the Church is called to evaluate and encourage every initiative to strengthen the family, which is the real source of all forms of fraternity and the foundation and primary way of peace."

*Pope Francis' address to the representatives of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar 8/2/2015*

24/1/2015 Pope Francis exhorts to Communicate the Family: A Privileged Place of Encounter with the Gift of Love - 49th World Day of Social Communications

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The UK has one of the highest rates of family breakdown in the Western world, with just 68.9% of children living with both parents, OECD research suggests, This is the fourth lowest rate in the OECD's table, behind Belgium, Latvia and Estonia.

Finland had the most children living with both parents, at 95.2%, whilst Germany stands at 82%, Italy at 92.1% and Spain at 91.5%.

The Marriage Foundation, a campaign group which champions marriage, said .....Family breakdown costs the government £44bn per year ... but "the government has no policy whatsoever to reduce or prevent the continued rise." ... "All kinds of transformational help can be offered to parents and couples when they come under life's pressures..... Our forgotten families need all the help we can offer,"

**Jocelyn Owens – Family Forge:** "As these figures and statements make clear the culture of family life in the UK needs encouragement. There is an increasing trend of family breakdown and so we can expect the 68 % figure of children living with both parents to decline further in this country.

The Family Forge aims to bolster family life among ordinary families to reemphasize the family's importance and redress and manage the proper balance that is necessary between the competing interests of the spouses in areas such as work, social, cultural and spiritual life, engendering also a greater understanding of the relationships between family members."