

## **One million children are growing up without a male role model: Report blames single-parent families and lack of men in classrooms**

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- Number of single-parent families rising by 20,000 each year
- Areas of Sheffield, Liverpool and Birmingham have largest amount of single parents
- Children from broken homes 50 per cent more likely to struggle at school
- Family break-ups are costing taxpayers £46 billion a year

A million children are growing up in ‘men deserts’, living without a father and rarely meeting an adult man, a study of family breakdown said yesterday. It said the continuing increase in the number of lone parent families means that in some areas three out of four families are headed by one parent.

Their children, most of whom are growing up without fathers, lack the influence of men not only at home but also in the other key areas of their lives, the report from the Centre for Social Justice said. In particular few ever meet men at school. One in four of all primary schools has no male teacher and four out of five have fewer than three, it found.

The report described the impact of family breakdown as an ‘emergency’ and said that the response of politicians of both Left and Right has been ‘feeble’. It urged David Cameron to ‘get a grip’. The findings are potentially embarrassing for the Prime Minister because the Centre for Social Justice is the brainchild of Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith, who launched it in 2004 shortly after being deposed as Tory leader.

Its director Christian Guy said: ‘For all of the promises the Conservatives made in opposition, hardly anything has been done to resist the tsunami of family breakdown battering the United Kingdom.’ The study, *Family Breakdown: The State Of The Nation*, said numbers of lone parent families are rising by 20,000 a year and will reach a total of two million before the next election in 2015.

Some areas are dominated by single parent families, it found. In one area of Sheffield, Manor Castle, 75 per cent of households with dependent children are lone parent families. The report said half of all children now being born will not grow up with both their birth parents and that in all a million children have no worthwhile contact with their fathers. It added: ‘Lack of male role models in many young lives is further compounded by the dearth of male teachers within state primary schools.’



Money matters: Single parent households are costing taxpayers £46 billion a year

Although these trends are nationwide, they are particularly pronounced in our poorest communities where two thirds of all young adolescents have seen their parents part.’ It said the costs of family break-up were ‘devastating’, adding that children from broken families are 50 per cent more likely to do badly at school, struggle to make friends, find it difficult to control their behaviour, or to overcome anxiety and depression.

The report estimated the cost of family break-up, including the price in benefits for state support of families without work, at £46billion a year, or £1,541 for each taxpayer. It projected that the bill will rise to £49billion by 2015.

The main engine of family break-up, it said, is the spread of cohabitation. ‘It is the instability of cohabiting couples rather than a surge in divorce rates that is fuelling the disintegration of the UK family,’ the report said. ‘Since 1996, the number of people cohabiting has doubled to nearly six million. Cohabiting parents are three times more likely to separate by the time a child is aged five than married couples.’

Since the election Mr. Cameron has failed to act on his pledge to give a tax break to married couples. He has, however, promoted same-sex marriage even though there was no mention of the subject in the Tory manifesto or the Coalition agreement.

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