



EMBARGOED UNTIL 28TH JAN 2010

Divorce at lowest level since the seventies

Marriage Week UK (Feb 7th –14th 2010) welcomes the continued decline in the divorce rate announced by the ONS today¹. Only a little over 1.1 percent of all married couples in the UK were divorced in 2008, the lowest level since 1979, illustrating the continuing strength and stability of marriage in the UK.

Some commentators will no doubt blame uncertainty in the economic climate as the reason, with couples deferring the decision to divorce, but the data simply continue the long term trend we have seen throughout the last decade.

“Couples who actively commit to each other in a public ceremony of marriage are much more likely to stay together than those who believe that magically their ‘loving feelings’ will keep them together”, said Dave Percival, National Coordinator for Marriage Week. “Research over the past few years by leading relationships researcher Prof Scott Stanley has clearly indicated the underlying importance of an active decision to marry, especially by men, as the key determining factor in whether relationships last. This is one of the key factors in why marriages are so much more stable than simply ‘living together’.”

Figures due out in Marriage Week from ONS on the numbers of marriages in 2008 are likely to show a further decline, even allowing for the increasing numbers marrying abroad (around 50,000 each year).

“Many social commentators are actively seeking to downplay the continuing importance and stability of marriage”, said Harry Benson of BCFT, “yet my research just published shows that the so called ‘stable long term (un-married) relationship’ is largely a myth! Just 3% of couples who stay together until their child is 15 years old are unmarried, almost all intact parents with 15 year old children are married.”

Marriage Week exists to raise the awareness of all in UK of the considerable social importance of marriage to society, and to encourage married couples everywhere to celebrate their commitment to each other.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

[Marriage Week UK](http://www.marriageweek.co.uk) celebrates the diversity and vibrancy of marriage as the basis for family life in the UK. It is timed to include Valentine’s Day (8th –14th Feb 2010) and has been held every year since 1997.

For further information contact Dave Percival, coordinator of Marriage Week UK, and founder of www.2-in-2-1.co.uk . Tel: 07802 660524; email: dave@2-in-2-1.co.uk

¹ Data on Divorces in 2008 will be released by ONS on 28th Jan 2010.