

The Cost of Family Breakdown is Criminal

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On this third day of marriage week, Relationships Foundation, the think tank for a better connected society, is highlighting the cost of family breakdown to the civil and criminal justice sector.

According to our Cost of Family Failure report, **family breakdown soaks up nearly £8 billion of the civil and criminal justice budget each year**. Clearly there would be a lag between a reduction in family breakdown, its impact on criminal and civil justice issues, and a reduction in cost to the taxpayer. However, indicatively, £8bn equates to around 260,000 police officers (there are currently 143,000 police officers in the UK), or 65,000 new prison places.

An analysis of 4,000 offenders by the Youth Justice Board found that 70% were from broken families.

An official Home Office Research Study in 2000 found “a close link between poor family relationships and a higher risk of offending”. It also found that young men from lone parent families are 1.6 times as likely to be persistent offenders as those from dual parent families.

Total civil and criminal justice costs

Police	£5.149 billion
Prisons	£1.236 billion
Court and legal services	£0.632 billion
Legal aid	£0.846 billion

Total cost for civil and criminal justice attributable to family breakdown in 2008-09 **£7,863 billion**

Commenting, Michael Trend, Executive Director of the Foundation said:

“The cost of family failure to our justice system is criminal.

“This only measures the cost on the taxpayer - each statistic represents a life that has failed to achieve its true potential.

“Making Britain family friendly benefits all types of households, including marriages. It is crucial for giving young people the life chances they deserve and for making our streets safer.”

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Notes to Editors

- • The Cost of Family Failure Report found that the total cost of family breakdown to the UK was £41.74 billion in 2010-11. This is £1,364 for every taxpayer. The total cost has risen by £70million since last year. The index looks at the cost of family breakdown to five key areas of public policy: Tax and Benefits, Housing, Health and Social Care, Civil & Criminal Justice and Education & Young People not in education, employment or training.
- • A full methodology is available in our Cost of Family Failure Report (p.27ff)
www.relationshipsfoundation.org/Web/OnlineStore/Product.aspx?ID=132.
In 2010 the Centre for Social Justice stated the ‘direct costs’ of family breakdown to the taxpayer as £20-24bn, but doesn’t attempt the “indirect costs such as increased drug and alcohol abuse, debt, educational underachievement, unemployment and crime”. Our iterative report attempts to estimate these indirect costs. For the criminal and civil justice section, we take the police, prisons, court and legal services and legal aid budget, and estimate for each the proportion attributable to family breakdown (around a quarter in each instance), and roll in the Child Maintenance budget. 25-27.5% seems reasonable given that:
 - ○ An analysis of 4,000 offenders by the Youth Justice Board found that 70% were from broken families. (Youth Justice Board figures quoted in Ware, J. (2009), “Yes family breakdown is behind broken Britain”, *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul, www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1198962/Yes-family-breakdown-IS-broken-Britain-Top-judge-says-national-tragedy-attacks-BBC-suppressing-debate.html).
 - ○ Young men from lone parent families are 1.6 times as likely to be persistent offenders as those from dual parent families.
 - ○ An official Home Office Research Study in 2000 found “a close link between poor family relationships and a higher risk of offending”. (Flood-Page, C., Campbell, S., Harrington, V. and Miller, J.

(2000), "Youth crime: Findings from the 1998/99 Youth Lifestyles Survey", *Home Office Research Study, 209*, London: Home Office). It also said:

- ▪ "Several studies have identified the importance of family structure on offending. Events such as separation, divorce and the creation of step-families can have a serious effect on young people's offending behaviour as they change the relationship between parents and children and also the degree of parental supervision that children receive (Wadsworth, 1979; Wells and Rankin, 1991)."
- ▪ "Attachment to family can provide protection against deviant behaviour and earlier studies have shown a strong link between offending and having a poor relationship with parents (Boswell, 1995; Graham and Bowling, 1995)."
- ○ Prison Population:
 - ▪ The Centre for Social Justice claims 70% of young offenders come from single parent families.
 - ▪ 27% of the prison population had been taken into care as a child, compared to 2% of the general population, while 47% male and 50% had run away from home as a child, compared to 11% of the general population.
 - ▪ 71% of children in custody have been involved with, or in the care of, social services before entering custody, while 75% have lived with someone other than a parent at some time, compared with only 1.5% of children in the general population.
 - ▪ Two out of five girls and one out of four boys in custody report suffering violence at home.
 - ▪ 30% of respondents in the 2008-09 British Crime Survey identified the main cause of crime as the lack of discipline from parents (Home Office (2009), op. cit).
- • To put our figure of £8 billion across the sector in perspective, according to *The Cost of Domestic Violence* report, domestic violence alone costs the criminal justice system £1.26 billion per year.
- • We assume an average salary of a police officer of £30,000, and the cost of building a new prison place at £119,000. The annual cost of one prisoner is about £40,000.
- • According to the Howard League for penal reform, there are 12,000 prisoners sharing rooms designed for one.
www.howardleague.org/overcrowding
- • **£8 Billion in context**

- ○ Figures from the latest full financial year (2009-10) show that UK's GDP totalled £1.4 trillion. General government net borrowing was £159.8 billion, or 11.4% of GDP, whereas general government debt was £1 trillion, or 71.3% of GDP. (Office for National Statistics (2010), *UK Government Debt and Deficit*.)
- ○ Reforms outlined in the recent Spending Review will deliver £81 billion worth of cuts in public spending by 2014-15.
- ○ There will be £7 billion extra welfare cuts, while a 34% cut in administration budgets across the whole of Whitehall and its arms-length bodies will deliver savings totalling £5.9 billion a year by 2014-15.
- ○ Cuts in defence, including a reduction in civilian staff by 25,000 by 2015, will deliver savings of £4.7 billion.
- ○ Total managed expenditure and receipts in 2010-11 will be as much as £697 billion (HM Treasury (2010), *Spending Review 2010*, London: The Stationery Office). The public cost of family failure alone is equivalent to about half the planned cuts in overall public spending.
- ○ At the end of July 2010, personal debt in the UK stood at £1.46 trillion, as much as the nation's GDP. Including mortgages, every adult in the UK owes an average of £29,918, while every household an average of £57,789 (OBR). Against the backdrop of these figures, each UK taxpayer will still have to foot a £1,364 bill a year to help defray the cost of family failure.
- • Marriage Week UK runs from the 7th to the 14th February <http://www.2-in-2-1.co.uk/mwuk/index.html>

The Relationships Foundation, established in 1993, is a Cambridge-based independent think tank seeking a better connected society. It studies the effect that culture, business and government have on relationships. It proposes new ideas for strengthening social connections, campaigns on issues where relationships are being undermined, and trains and equips people to think relationally for themselves.

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