

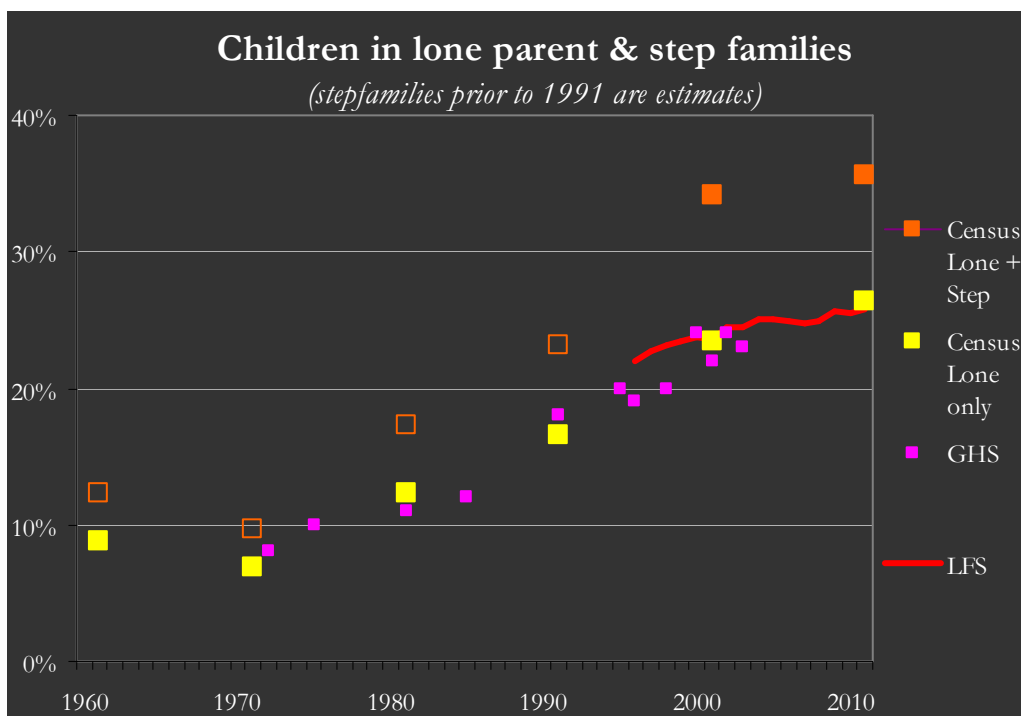


The
Marriage
Foundation

One in three children face Christmas without both parents

Harry Benson, The Marriage Foundation
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- New analysis of Census data shows that 4.2 million children in England & Wales were not living with both natural parents in 2011, comprising 3.1 million children living in lone parent families and a further 1.1 million living in married or cohabiting step-families.
- Previous Census data show that the proportion of children in lone parent families has more than trebled since the 1960s from 8.8% in 1961 and 7.0% in 1971 to 26.3% in 2011.
- Although it is not possible to obtain data on stepfamilies prior to 2001, the overall level of family breakdown will have risen from around 10% to the current level of 35.6%.
- In 2011, the lowest levels of family breakdown were almost entirely in the South, especially the commuter belt around London. Fewer than 20% of children in Chiltern in Bucks and Elmbridge in Surrey do not live with both parents.
- The highest levels of family breakdown were concentrated in inner cities, the North, in Wales, and along the South coast. Over 50% of children in the London boroughs of both Lambeth and Islington are not living with both parents.
- Although not quite a 'divide', there is clear evidence of a north-south 'difference'.



Marriage Foundation Briefing Note

Children not living with both natural parents

Ideally, the full extent of family breakdown should be measured by the proportion of fifteen year olds who are not living with both natural parents. Fifteen is a good cut-off age because after that point the figures become distorted due to those sixteen year olds and over who have left school and home.

Failing this, the best indication of family breakdown can be measured by the proportion of children of all ages living either with one parent or with a stepfamily.

From 2001, this data is fairly easily accessible. Before then however, Census data on family breakdown is only available regarding those children living with a lone parent.

Lone parenthood understates the extent of family breakdown because it disregards those parents who have moved in with or married a new partner to form a stepfamily. Nonetheless it still gives a good indication of trend.

The analysis in the table below relies on different sample sizes and slightly different measurements from each year of Census data between 1961 and 2011. In all cases, however, it measures 'children' rather than 'families' or 'households'.

In some cases, data could only be compiled on 'one family households'. The omission of the tiny minority of households with more than one family should make little difference to the proportions.

The graph on the front page includes an estimate of overall family breakdown between 1961 and 1991 by adding a similar ratio of stepfamilies to lone parents found in 2001 and 2011.

The overall conclusion is as follows:

- Children living in lone parent families have increased from 8.8% in 1961 to the current level of 26.3% in 2011
- Children not living with both natural parents – i.e. including stepfamilies – have increased from an estimated 12% in 1961 and 10% in 1971 to the current actual level of 35.6% in 2001.

Family breakdown: number of children by parents marital status

	<i>Living with both natural parents</i>		<i>Living with one or neither parent</i>		<i>Sample size</i>
	Both parents married or a couple	Both parents cohabiting	Lone parent	Married or cohabiting step family	
1961	91.2%	n/a	8.8%	n/a	1,312,934
1971	93.0%	n/a	7.0%	n/a	1,220,830
1981	87.6%	n/a	12.4%	n/a	1,143,857
1991	75.0%	5.9%	16.5%	n/a	616,088
2001	59.4%	6.5%	23.4%	10.7%	361,950
2011	53.5%	10.9%	26.3%	9.3%	11,916,041

Source: analysis of Census data from 1961 to 2011

The north-south 'difference' in family breakdown

Census data from 2011 allows an analysis of variations in family breakdown across England and Wales. The following tables show regional variations and then – on the next page – list those local areas with the highest and lowest proportions of children not living with both natural parents.

- Although the overall difference between north and south is small, it is apparent. The tables below show that levels of family breakdown are generally lower in the South than in the North or Wales.
- The table over the page shows that the lowest levels of family breakdown are almost entirely concentrated in the South. In contrast, the areas with the highest levels of family breakdown are found in inner cities, the North, Wales, and along the South coast.

Regional variations in family breakdown

<i>Less in the South, more in the North/Wales</i>	%
South East	31%
East of England	32%
South West	34%
East Midlands	36%
West Midlands	36%
London	37%
Yorkshire and The Humber	37%
Wales	39%
North West	39%
North East	41%

Top 20 counties/authorities, least/most family breakdown

Least family breakdown

Southern, rural, affluent

<i>South</i>	Wokingham UA	21%
<i>South</i>	Surrey	23%
<i>South</i>	Buckinghamshire	24%
<i>South</i>	Windsor and Maidenhead UA	24%
<i>South</i>	West Berkshire UA	27%
<i>North</i>	Rutland UA	28%
<i>South</i>	Cambridgeshire	28%
<i>South</i>	Oxfordshire	28%
<i>South</i>	Hertfordshire	28%
<i>South</i>	Bath and North East Somerset UA	30%
<i>Wales</i>	Monmouthshire	30%
<i>South</i>	South Gloucestershire UA	30%
<i>South</i>	Gloucestershire	30%
<i>North</i>	Leicestershire	31%
<i>South</i>	Bracknell Forest UA	31%
<i>South</i>	West Sussex	31%
<i>South</i>	Central Bedfordshire UA	31%
<i>South</i>	Shropshire UA	31%
<i>South</i>	Hampshire	31%
<i>North</i>	North Yorkshire	31%

Most family breakdown

Northern, Welsh, South coast, inner city

<i>North</i>	Blackpool UA	51%
<i>North</i>	Kingston upon Hull, City of UA	47%
<i>North</i>	North East Lincolnshire UA	47%
<i>North</i>	Nottingham UA	46%
<i>North</i>	Hartlepool UA	46%
<i>Wales</i>	Merthyr Tydfil	46%
<i>North</i>	Halton UA	45%
<i>North</i>	Merseyside	45%
<i>Wales</i>	Blaenau Gwent	44%
<i>North</i>	Middlesbrough UA	44%
<i>North</i>	Redcar and Cleveland UA	44%
<i>Coast</i>	Torbay UA	43%
<i>North</i>	Stoke-on-Trent UA	42%
<i>Wales</i>	Caerphilly	42%
<i>Wales</i>	Rhondda Cynon Taf	42%
<i>Coast</i>	Portsmouth UA	42%
<i>North</i>	Darlington UA	42%
<i>Wales</i>	Torfaen	41%
<i>Wales</i>	Newport	41%
<i>Coast</i>	Isle of Wight UA	41%

Top 40 boroughs, least/most family breakdown

Least family breakdown

Southern, rural, affluent

<i>South</i>	Chiltern	19%
<i>South</i>	Elmbridge	19%
<i>South</i>	St Albans	20%
<i>London</i>	Richmond upon Thames	20%
<i>South</i>	Waverley	21%
<i>South</i>	Hart	21%
<i>South</i>	South Bucks	22%
<i>South</i>	South Cambridgeshire	22%
<i>South</i>	Woking	22%
<i>South</i>	Mole Valley	22%
<i>South</i>	Guildford	22%
<i>South</i>	Epsom and Ewell	23%
<i>South</i>	Surrey Heath	23%
<i>South</i>	Uttlesford	24%
<i>South</i>	South Oxfordshire	24%
<i>South</i>	Winchester	24%
<i>South</i>	Mid Sussex	24%
<i>South</i>	East Hertfordshire	24%
<i>South</i>	Sevenoaks	24%
<i>South</i>	Tandridge	24%
<i>London</i>	Kingston upon Thames	24%
<i>North</i>	Rushcliffe	25%
<i>South</i>	Reigate and Banstead	25%
<i>North</i>	Harborough	25%
<i>South</i>	Vale of White Horse	25%
<i>South</i>	Horsham	25%
<i>South</i>	East Cambridgeshire	25%
<i>South</i>	South Northamptonshire	26%
<i>South</i>	Brentwood	26%
<i>South</i>	Wycombe	26%
<i>South</i>	Tunbridge Wells	26%
<i>London</i>	Harrow	26%
<i>South</i>	Aylesbury Vale	26%
<i>South</i>	West Oxfordshire	26%
<i>South</i>	Cotswold	26%
<i>South</i>	Three Rivers	26%
<i>South</i>	Runnymede	27%
<i>North</i>	Derbyshire Dales	27%
<i>South</i>	East Hampshire	27%
<i>South</i>	Maldon	27%

Most family breakdown

Northern, Welsh, South coast, inner city

<i>London</i>	Lambeth	51%
<i>London</i>	Islington	50%
<i>North</i>	Knowsley	49%
<i>London</i>	Southwark	49%
<i>North</i>	Liverpool	49%
<i>London</i>	Lewisham	48%
<i>Coast</i>	Thanet	46%
<i>Coast</i>	Hastings	46%
<i>Wales</i>	Merthyr Tydfil	46%
<i>London</i>	Barking and Dagenham	46%
<i>North</i>	South Tyneside	46%
<i>North</i>	Manchester	45%
<i>Coast</i>	Great Yarmouth	45%
<i>North</i>	Salford	44%
<i>Wales</i>	Blaenau Gwent	44%
<i>South</i>	Norwich	44%
<i>Coast</i>	Gosport	44%
<i>London</i>	Hackney	44%
<i>London</i>	Greenwich	43%
<i>South</i>	Corby	43%
<i>North</i>	Lincoln	43%
<i>North</i>	Wirral	43%
<i>North</i>	Sunderland	43%
<i>London</i>	Croydon	43%
<i>London</i>	Haringey	43%
<i>North</i>	St. Helens	42%
<i>Coast</i>	Weymouth and Portland	42%
<i>North</i>	Tameside	42%
<i>Wales</i>	Caerphilly	42%
<i>Wales</i>	Rhondda Cynon Taf	42%
<i>North</i>	Wolverhampton	42%
<i>North</i>	Ashfield	42%
<i>North</i>	Barrow-in-Furness	42%
<i>North</i>	Barnsley	42%
<i>South</i>	Tendring	42%
<i>Coast</i>	Havant	42%
<i>North</i>	Coventry	41%
<i>Wales</i>	Torfaen	41%
<i>North</i>	Burnley	41%
<i>North</i>	Doncaster	41%

(Source Census 2011; number of children in lone parent and stepfamilies as % of all children)