

# Happiness, Hopes and Wellbeing

## A survey of children's view on parental relationships

The Centre for Separated Families

### Survey details

The survey asked 1000 children living in households to tell us whether their parents are:

- a) Married or living together
- b) Separated or divorced with a good or friendly relationship
- c) Separated or divorced with a bad or unfriendly relationship

A series of 25 questions about perceptions of happiness, hopes for the future and perceptions of wellbeing were then put to the children and the results were analysed according to the three different categories.

### Sample questions and responses

We asked children to rate themselves on a scale of one to ten

#### 'how happy are you?'

Children who rated themselves the happiest were those living with both parents; statistically almost two and a half times happier than children living in separated or divorced households whose parents maintained a bad or unfriendly relationship.

Over a quarter of children living with separated or divorced parents who maintained good or friendly relationships considered themselves to be happy compared to a fifth of children living in households with divorced or separated parents who had a bad or unfriendly relationship.

We asked children to tell us

#### 'how close are you to your parents?'

Children living with both parents and children living with divorced or separated parents who have good relationships considered themselves closer to their parents.

Almost one quarter of children living with divorced or separated parents with bad relationships revealed they were not close to their parents.

### We asked children to tell us about their home life

Over 90% of children living with both parents and similarly those children living with separated parents who maintained healthy relationships said they were happy.

However, 1 in 5 children living with divorced or separated parents who have bad relationships disclosed they were unhappy with their home life and felt that this would mean they were less likely to achieve in life.

We asked children:

#### 'Are you happy with your achievements at school or college?'

Children who were happiest with their school / college / work were those living with both parents or separated parents who had a good relationship.

We asked children about their perception of wellbeing in relation to marriage or living together, we asked:

**Do you feel that children whose parents are married or living together get a better start in life than those whose parents are divorced or separated?**

Children living with divorced or separated parents with good relationships feel that they had been given a far greater start in life than those living with divorced or separated parents with bad relationships.

Whilst seventy percent of children whose parents were divorced or separated with a bad or unfriendly relationship felt that children whose parents are married or living together get a better start in life.

We then asked children to consider questions about their own future as parents. We asked:

**'would you like to have children when you are older?'**

Children whose parents were divorced or separated were less likely to want to have children of their own in later life.

The survey also asked:

**'do you think it is important that parents live together when they have children?'**

Almost all of the children whose parents were married or living together felt that it was important for parents to live together whilst children whose parents were divorced and separated but with a good or friendly relationship were less likely to feel that.

The highest proportion of children who felt it was not important were those living with divorced or separated parents with bad or unfriendly relationships.

**We asked about family and separation and whether this had affected children's lives.**

Nearly three quarters of the children living with divorced or separated parents with bad or unfriendly relationships recognised that their lives had been affected in ways that included not seeing one of their parents as much as they would like, losing touch with grandparents, aunts and uncles and having to witness their parents arguments.

Our final question to children was:

**'If your parents were not getting along, would you prefer them to separate or continue to live together?'**

Overwhelmingly, all children said that they would prefer their parents to stay together rather than separate, even if they were not getting on well together.'

*The poll was undertaken by One Poll in October 2008. Full results along with policy and research implications will be published by the Centre for Separated Families on 27th October 2008 and will be available on the website [www.separatedfamilies.org.uk](http://www.separatedfamilies.org.uk)*

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