

Lone parents across the EU 27 countries

Alexandra Skew and Tina Haux, ISER, University of Essex, Colchester CO4 3SQ,
thaux@essex.ac.uk, +44 (0)1206 872649.

Frequently, welfare regimes have been categorised by whether lone parents are treated as mothers or workers. Over the past decade there has been an international trend towards increased activation of lone parents. This has been driven in part by concerns over child poverty rates in workless (lone parent) households. Therefore, the question of how to reconcile work and care responsibilities has become even more pertinent for this group as access to social assistance is becoming increasingly time-limited and conditional.

In this paper we take the poor/non-poor mother/worker typology as proposed by Kilkey as a starting point and examine how the countries of the European Union fit into this pattern today. Using the Community Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) we examine lone parents across the EU-27 in terms of their incidence, characteristics, labour market behaviour and their income levels and sources. A systematic comparison of lone parents in Europe has not been completed for some time and certainly never including the new accession countries of Eastern Europe. It will be able to shed light on whether the focus on activation has indeed led to an increase in the employment rates of lone parents and an amelioration of child poverty in those households across the EU.