

Lone Parent Families

The background of the slide is a solid light beige color. In the bottom right corner, there are several overlapping, wavy, light grey lines that create a sense of movement and depth.

Facts & Figures

- Percentage of lone parent families has tripled since 1971
- Britain has one of highest proportions of lone parents in Europe
- In 2000 – 25% of families with dependent children were lone parent families, accounting for 23% of dependent children
- 90% of lone parent families headed by women

Why the increase?

- Some factors the same as for divorce

Other ideas about the increase

- New Right – Murray (1990)
 - Generosity of the welfare state
 - Underclass
 - Promiscuity
 - Lack of socialisation for boys
 - Vicious circle

Reactions to Lone parenthood

- Seen as a major social problem
 - Moral panics
 - Threat to society
- Welfare responses
 - Child Support Agency 1993
 - 1997 Childcare Tax Credit
 - National Minimum Wage

The reality of lone parents

- Never married lone mother only makes up 40% of all lone parents
 - Many of these are from broken cohabiting relationships
 - Vast majority of births are joint registered

The reality of lone parenthood (2)

- Absent fathers a problem?
 - Question of participation in upbringing
 - Little evidence of difference in crime rates (Home Office, 1985)
- More likely to live in poverty
 - Poor housing
 - Dependence on state benefits
 - Poor educational achievement

The reality of lone parenthood (3)

- Teenage mothers aiming for council housing is a myth
 - Average age of single mother – 34 (National Council for One Parent Families, 1999)
 - Teenage mothers - <3% of lone parents

Further Reading

- Browne, K. (2002) Introducing Sociology for AS Level, pp.70-72
- Moore et al (2002) Sociology for AS Level, p.53
- Taylor et al (1995) Sociology in Focus, pp.251-2
- Haralambos & Holborn (2000) Sociology Themes & Perspectives, pp.540-544