

SOLE PARENT PROUD FACTS



...Did You Know?

There are a lot of stereotypes and misconceptions about single parents. Here's some information about sole parents that you might not know:

Age of Single Parents

The majority of parents raising children alone are over thirty years old. Most have become single parents after the breakdown of a partnership. Contrary to the stereotype, less than three in every hundred lone parents is a teenager.



Size of Sole Parent Families

Sole parent families are small. Once again, contrary to the stereotype, the majority of single mothers have one child, 33% have two, 12% have three and 3% have four children or more.

Time Relying On Income Support

The majority of sole parents who are receiving Parenting Payment Single will spend less than three years living on income support payments. Many sole parents move off their income support when their income increases through wage or business income, or if they re-partner.

Why Do More Women Receive Parenting Payment

The conditions of payment for Parenting Payment Single and Parenting Payment Partnered are the same for women and for men. The payments recognise the income needs of people who are not in the paid workforce because they are caring for children at home. The different employment and family roles of men and women during a partnership are often continued after a partnership ends. Women who have been primary care providers for their children often continue this role after separation, usually with their former partner's agreement. Men who are single parents tend to have care of older children, and are more likely to have full-time work.

Single Mothers and Paid Work

Around half of the single parents who receive income support, also earn some income through paid work. Research into mothers' workforce participation has consistently shown that mothers in both single and couple parent families tend to join the paid workforce as children become older and more independent. In fact, the employment rate of single mothers is only slightly lower than that of married mums (see *Single Mothers in Australia – Stats and Facts* for the latest statistics on workforce participation).



We're Poor but we're Positive

Single parent families are the most financially disadvantaged families in Australia. Single mothers living on income support and those who manage on part-time wages are frequently surviving on incomes under the poverty line. Child support is of minimal assistance to children in these families as 40% of single parents receive no child support at all, and 40% of those remaining receive \$5 or less per week (see *Single Mothers in Australia – Stats and Facts* for the latest child support statistics). Despite all this, 94% of single mothers surveyed by the Age were optimistic about the future - higher optimism than any other group!

How are Children of Single Parent Families Affected

Is having one parent the main issue for children's well-being?

No - the main issue is not how many parents does the child live with, but rather, how does the child live. Poverty, violence, physical and mental health problems, inadequate housing, loss and uncertainty are just some of the factors which lead to poor outcomes for children in all families. Unfortunately, due to the social stigma and inequalities faced by single parents and their children, single parent families are often disadvantaged in many of these areas.

Outcomes for children can be improved by promoting the health, safety and economic security of all families, as well as creating positive policies and communities for single parents and their children.



Adapted with permission by Kim Hamilton from resources by the NCSMC and the CSMC (Vic).



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