

How long do situations of single parenthood last? An estimation based on French data*

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Key question

Single-parent families (parents living alone with at least one minor child), an increasingly common situation, currently account for over 20% of families with minor children in France and Europe. Single parenthood is often associated with higher risks of insecurity and exclusion, to which social policies must respond. It is then important to know how long such situations last. We propose a method which, based on the length of time spent in the situation of single parenthood at a given time (seniority), enables the duration spent in such a situation to be estimated for the first time in France.

Methodology

The duration of single parenthood is estimated using an original model, which combines the methodology proposed by Nickell (applied to the seniority in the situation) and the Cox model. The estimations are based on the 2011 *Family and Housing Survey*, and the 2005 and 2011 *Survey of Family and Intergenerational Relations*.

Main results

- The length of time (duration) spent as a single-parent is longer for women than for men. Half of the women and half of the men heading a single-parent family remain in this situation for less than 3.7 and 2.2 years respectively. On average, single parenthood lasts 6.1 years for women and 4.1 years for men.
- For women, the instantaneous probability of exiting a situation of single parenthood is 1.8 times higher when they are separated than if they have had a child with a partner who did not live with them.
- Women without a qualification are less likely to exit the situation of single parenthood than those with a qualification.

Estimation of the average duration of single parenthood for women by reason for entering the situation



Coverage: women, mainland France.

Source: Insee, *Family and Housing* (FHS) survey, 2011 and Ined-Insee, *Erfi*, waves 1 and 3, 2005 and 2011.

Main messages

Inferring the distribution of a duration variable based on stock sampling (sample of single-parent families at a given moment, regardless of the date they entered this situation and for which only the seniority in the situation is observed) is possible providing an estimation of the flows is obtained. When applied to single-parent families, this method shows that single parents either exit the situation of single parenthood quickly or, conversely, remain in the situation for a long period of time. These results are a first essential stage in understanding the dynamics of situations of single parenthood.

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