



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS N° 27

CHILDREN IN SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

Researchers: Judit Monostori

Contact: monostori@demografia.hu

According to the census in Hungary, 20 per cent of children aged 0–18 lived in single parent families (SPF) in 2011. This rate has only slightly increased during the last two decades. We have more and more empirical evidence, however, on the increasing instability of partnerships, the growing number of people re-partnering, the de-standardization of life cycles and on the increasing pace of changes in family arrangements. Cross-sectional surveys do not refer to these dynamic movements on the micro level, because these surveys are only snapshots of life cycles, they do not show how many people are affected by different family arrangements during their lives. At the same time, via surveys, it is possible to estimate the percentage of children who have already lived in SPF. This is done by taking into account the percentage of children who live in a two-parent family, with only one biological parent present. Presumably, these children have experienced

the dissolution of their parents' union or the death of one of their parents during their childhood. If we add the proportion of these children to the children living in SPF during a given time, we can estimate the number of children who have experienced lone parenthood earlier.

Using this approach, 27 per cent of children between 0 and 18 lived in lone parent family for a while, until their age in 2011. The older the child the more the risk is of an SPF period. Among children aged 15–18, 37 per cent have experienced a single parent family episode during their childhood. We also estimated the proportion of children who may have experienced the single parent family status according to their mother's educational attainment. The [Table](#) shows that the lower the educational level of the mother, the greater the proportion of those children who lived in a one parent family during their childhood.

Table Children in different age groups, and according their mother's level of education by family types, 2011
Source of data: Author's calculation calculation based on data from census 2011.

Remark: Only for households with one family.

	Two parent families				Single parent families	Together	Single parent families, experienced during lifetime (estimated)
	Both of them are biological parents	Only mother is biological parent	Only father is biological parent	None of them are biological parent			
Age of children							
0–2	82.3	1.2	0.7	3.7	12.0	100.0	14.0
3–5	78.1	2.8	0.8	3.7	14.6	100.0	18.2
6–9	71.2	5.2	1.1	3.4	19.0	100.0	25.3
10–14	64.2	7.8	1.5	2.7	23.7	100.0	33.0
15–18	60.2	8.5	1.9	2.4	27.0	100.0	37.3
0–18	69.7	5.6	1.3	3.1	20.3	100.0	27.2
Mother's educational level							
ISCED 0–1	62.7	7.0	1.9	7.7	20.7	100.0	29.6
ISCED 2	68.5	7.4	1.3	3.0	19.9	100.0	28.6
ISCED 3–4	71.8	5.4	1.2	2.2	19.5	100.0	26.1
ISCED 5–8	79.2	3.4	1.0	1.3	15.0	100.0	20.7
Total	69.7	5.6	1.3	3.1	20.3	100.0	27.2