

Single-mothers' time arrangements in Spain:

Balancing work and family¹

Núria García* and Marc Ajenjo*

Submitted to European Population Conference 2016 to be considered in families and households

Mainz, 31 August - 3 September 2016

Abstract

This paper analyses the time-use of single-mother households compared to households with two parents. We calculate the amount of time spent in daily activities by the mother to measure the time devoted to care-giving, housework, work, personal care and leisure. Women who form single-mother families are the main family supporters, therefore they have higher employment rates. For this reason, we hypothesize that they would spend less time doing household work. The second objective is to reveal which individual level variables (employment status, level of education, civil status) are associated with the time devoted to childcare in each nuclei typology. The third objective is to estimate the time invested in children and household tasks by the other household members in order to determine whether there is more support in single-mother families compared to dual-parent families. For our analysis, we use the Spain Time Use Survey carried out in 2009-2010 which includes individual activity diaries (24 hours divided in intervals of 10 minutes) of each household member aged 10 years and above. Preliminary results confirm that single mothers have a different time allocation, spending less time on household tasks, more in remunerated work, however spend an equal amount of time on childcare.

Key words: *time use, single-mother families, childcare, housework.*

¹ This communication is part of the project *Espacios de vida y usos del tiempo en las familias post divorcio* (Ref. CSO2012-39157) financed by Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, Spain. This research is also part of the doctoral thesis of Núria García Saladrigas, registered in the doctorate of Demography of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

*Centre for Demographic Studies, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain.

Introduction

In recent decades, the increasing number of divorces is generating new living arrangements. After a divorce, children live with their mother more often than with their father. Given one less adult to contribute resources to the family, single mothers may face difficult decisions related to allocation of their time to market and non-market work. Single mothers face an inevitable dilemma in allocating their time between earning income and caring for their children (Himmelweit et al, 2004). They are more likely to feel pressure to work, and to work full-time to support their families, however this could leave less time available caring for children, household work, and leisure (Mauldin, 1990).

Regarding childcare, some studies argue that single parenthood and maternal employment have produced a loss of time with children (Milkie et al, 2004). Researchers refer to possible differences in the time allocation preferences of single and married mothers in order to explain these dissimilarities (Douthitt et al., 1990) while others refer to differences in time availability and needs (Sandberg and Hofferth, 2001). However, the empirical base upon which these comparisons rest is limited because of the small sample sizes (Keding and Bianchi, 2008).

We must also take into account cultural norms that regulate how parents should behave or “do parenthood”. New ideals of parenthood include a greater role of parental input into child development. Mothers and fathers may spend more time with children because of changes in family values, which emphasize the importance of being active in parenting (Gracia, 2014). We must consider the possibility that single mothers may reallocate priorities to protect time with children (Bianchi, 2000). This could include reducing their time spent on other activities as housework, volunteer work, sleep, and free-time pursuits.

Single mothers do not have the support for parenting from a partner that dual parent mothers have. Many have to negotiate with their former partner about expenditures of either time or money. Nevertheless, the time that the non-resident father spends with his children after a divorce decreases especially for the quotidian activities and sometimes reach the level of the so called “Disneyland dads” (Stewart, 1999), which only have contact with the children for leisure activities. At the same time, living with other adults, such as her parents, may alter mother’s time allocation. Other adults can contribute not only in economic resources but also in time (Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan, 2002). These adults can help perform household work and child care, which can reduce single-mother’s time strains.

Context of study: Spain

The bread-winner model is still predominant in Spain where the inclusion of the women into the labour market was later than in other European countries (Sevilla-Sanz et al, 2010) and traditional norms are more established. Single-parent families have become an increasingly prevalent family form in Spain. In 2011 over 16 per cent of the nuclei with at least one child under 18 years old existed in the form of a single parent household. This percentage of single parent households may seem high, but in the European context, Spain's percentage of single parents is still below the average.

Table 1 shows the features of single-mothers compared to dual parent mothers. First of all, single mothers have less children and the age of the youngest child is higher. That is not strange if we consider that the vast majority of the single mothers used to be a dual-parent mother. For this reason, the mean age of the single mothers is also higher. All children demand time, but the younger the child, the greater the need for constant supervision. This variable therefore is expected to explain a large proportion of the difference in time allocation.

Historically, single mothers participated in the labour force at higher rates than married mothers, and our sample is not an exception. In Spain most single mothers work. More than ninety per cent are actively employed; fifteen percent more than dual parent mothers. The percentage of women not in the labour market, such as housewives, is bigger in the dual parent families. As we will see in our analysis this characteristic has a strong effect on time allocation on other activities, as the time invested on work cannot be dedicated to other activities.

Another important aspect is that these families live more frequently with other people or other nuclei. Although the majority of single parent families are still independent, female-headed households, one in four single-mothers live with other people. This can be seen as a coping mechanism to economic and social needs (Treviño, 2011).

Regarding civil status, the typical trajectory of these women is that they went through a divorce or separation. For this reason, more than fifty per cent are divorced and only six per cent are widowed. Finally, we will consider in the analysis other characteristics as less education attainment or lower use of domestic service.

Table 1: Features of single-mother families in Spain

	Single-mothers	Dual parent
Mean age young children	9,05	6,79
Number of children		
One	72,5%	49,2%
Two or more	27,5%	50,8%
Employment status		
Employed	64,2%	60,7%
Unemployed	26,4%	14,0%
Non-working	6,6%	23,9%
Others	2,8%	1,4%
Civil status		
Single	28,6%	8,5%
Married	9,4%	90,3%
Widowed	6,3%	0,2%
Divorced	55,7%	1,1%
Educational attainment		
Less than primary	16,7%	16,3%
Primary	32,1%	23,4%
Secondary	26,1%	23,1%
Higher	25,1%	37,2%
Nationality		
Natives	80,1%	82,1%
Foreigners	19,9%	17,9%
Household typology		
Only one nucleus	74,9%	93,4%
+ other people	16,7%	4,9%
+ other nuclei	8,4%	1,8%
Domestic service		
Yes	6,3%	10,1%
No	93,7%	89,9%
Mean age mother	39,43	38,76

Source: Authors' calculations based on the micro-data from the Time Use Survey 2009-2010.

Hypothesis

Considering the previous research on family time and the context of Spain, we hypothesize the following:

- A. Regarding time use differences between single mothers and dual-partner mothers:
 - 1. Single mothers spend the same amount of time in childcare as mothers in dual parent families. We think that they strongly value childcare. For this reason they will reduce time in other activities but not in childcare.
 - 2. Single mothers reduce the time dedicated to household tasks.
 - 3. As the single mother is the main support of the family, they spend more time in paid work.
 - 4. Single mothers reduce their leisure time.
- B. Employment status is the variable that has more impact in the distribution of time among single mothers.
- C. The members of single mother households spend more time in childcare and household tasks than members of dual parent families. We expect more contribution of these members, especially if there are women.

Data

To perform our analysis we use the Spanish Time Use Survey carried out in 2009-2010 which is the second edition of the time use survey conducted by the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (INE). This is a non-periodic survey directed at a sample of 9,541 households and 25,896 individuals. The sample is collected more often on weekends since it is considered that these days have a greater variety in population's behaviour. For this purpose, the sample is subdivided in two sub-samples of equal size, one which must complete the diary from Monday to Thursday and the other from Friday to Sunday.

All household members aged 10 years old and above must complete the activity diary on a chosen day. The diary's time sheet covers 24 consecutive hours, from 6am to 6am the next day, and is divided into 10 minute intervals. In each of these, the informant should report the main activity, the secondary activity carried out at the same time (if applicable) and person with whom the activity was conducted. These activities are coded according to a harmonised list of activities from Eurostat, which considers

10 large groups²: personal care, work, studies, household and family, volunteer work and meetings, social life and recreation, sports and open air activities, hobbies and games, means of communication, and non-specified travel and use of time. In addition, households and individual questionnaires provide us with valuable sociodemographic information.

As we are interested in families with dependent children we have selected the households with only one nucleus with at least one child younger than 18 years. Our sample includes 278 single mother households and 2,148 dual parent households.

Methods

As we want to estimate the time that the mother spends on different activities over a day, our dependent variables are: childcare, housework, paid work, personal care, leisure and other activities. If we select one individual and add the time invested in all these activities we obtain 24 hours. On the other hand, our independent variable is the nuclei typology: single mother or dual parent. Moreover, we also control for other variables: weekend day, age of the youngest child, number of children, age of the mother, mother educational attainment, mother nationality, domestic service, household typology and mother's employment status.

We perform three General Linear Models to analyse the time differences between single mothers and dual parent mothers. The model can be expressed as:

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * x_1 + \beta_2 * x_2 + \dots + \beta_p * x_p + e$$

where y is the difference of time between single mothers and dual parent mothers with characteristics (x_1, \dots, x_p) and β the vector of the coefficient. We determine a reference category for each p variable of the model, obtaining $k-1$ coefficients for each variable, where k is the number of categories. We reproduce the General Linear Models for each dependent variable (childcare, housework, paid work, personal care, leisure and other activities).

The analysis of mother's time comprises two different parts. In the first step we perform our analysis comparing single mothers with dual parent mothers. To establish which of these variables have an effect we built three models. The first only includes the independent variable (nuclei typology), and weekend day as a control variable. In the second model, we add the age of the youngest child. Finally

² We group these variables in five categories: childcare, housework, paid work, personal care, leisure and other activities.

in the third model we incorporate all the other control variables mentioned before. Secondly, as we expect the effect of employment status to be so important it has to be analysed independently. We divide our population in two subgroups: employed and not in labour market mothers. We repeat the analysis for each subgroup with the same three models.

Finally, we will analyse the contribution of the other members of the household using General Linear Models in which the dependent variable will be the time spend by other woman and other man of the household.

Preliminary results

Table 2: Single mothers with children less than age 18 time uses (reference dual-parent mothers)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	*	B	*	B	*
Childcare	-0:38	***	-0:05		-0:03	
Housework	-0:31	***	-0:46	***	-0:47	***
Paid work	0:44	***	0:37	**	0:29	**
Personal care	0:05		0:06		0:07	
Leisure	0:20	**	0:09		0:18	**
Others	-0:00		-0:01		-0:04	

Model I: Nuclei typology + Weekend day

Model II: Model I + Age of the youngest child

Model III: Model II + All control variables

The thresholds of significance are: *** 1%; ** 5%; * 10%.

When we compare the time that single mothers spends in child care with the time that the dual parent mother spends we see that the first one invests thirty eight minutes less. However, this difference disappears in Model 2 in which we add age of the youngest child. Hence, single mothers are investing less time in childcare, but only because their children are older.

Regarding housework, and as we expected, single mothers spend half an hour less than dual parent mothers. When we control by age of the youngest child this difference increases to forty six minutes less. Single mothers spend also 44 minutes more than dual parent mothers in paid work per day. When we add other variables, they are still working around half an hour more.

Contrary to what we expected, single mothers spend twenty minutes more in leisure. Surprisingly, even in Model 3, in which we add all the control variables, this difference is still significant. We hypothesize that there is a big difference in leisure between employed single mothers and single mothers that are not formally in the labour market.

Reproducing the models for each subgroup of mothers (employed and non employed) we are going to establish if this difference persists for all single mothers or whether the employment status explains part of this divergence in time arrangements between single and dual parent mothers.

References

- Bianchi, S. M. (2000). "Maternal employment and time with children: dramatic change or surprising continuity?". *Demography*, 37(4), 401-414.
- Douthitt, R. A. (1991). "Children ' s Time Use in Single- and Two-Parent Families : Does Household Organization Matter?" *Home Economics Research Journal*, 20(1), 40-51.
- Gracia, P. (2014). "Fathers' Child Care Involvement and Children's Age in Spain: A Time Use Study on Differences by Education and Mothers' Employment". *European sociological review*, 30 (2), 137-150.
- Himmelweit, S., Bergmann, B., Green, K., Albelda, R., Hundert, W. C. of O., & Koren, C. (2004). Dialogue: Lone Mothers: What is to be Done? *Feminist Economics*, 10(2), 237-264.
- Kendig, S. M., & Bianchi, S. M. (2008). "Single, cohabitating, and married mothers' time with children". *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 70(5), 1228-1240.
- Mauldin, T. (1990). Time Allocation of One- and Two-Parent Mothers. *Lifestyles: Family and Economic Issues*, 11(1).
- Milkie, M. A., Mattingly, M. J., Nomaguchi, K. M., Bianchi, S. M., & Robinson, J. P. (2004): "The time squeeze: Parental statuses and feelings about time with children." *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66 (3), 739-761.
- Sandberg, J. F., & Hofferth, S. L. (2001). "Changes in children's time with parents: United States, 1981-1997". *Demography*, 38, 423 - 436.
- Sevilla-Sanz, A., Gimenez-Nadal, J. I., & Fernández, C. (2010). "Gender roles and the division of unpaid work in Spanish households". *Feminist Economics*, 16(4), 137-184.
- Sigle-rushton, W., & McLanahan, S. (2002). "The living arrangements of new unmarried mothers". *Demography*, 39(3), 415-433.

- Stewart, S. D. (1999). Disneyland Dads , Disneyland Moms ? *Journal of Family Issues*, 20(4), 539-556.
- Treviño, R. (2011). *La monoparentalidad en la encrucijada, perfiles y dinámica*. Madrid: Editorial Académica Española.