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Employing single mothers in Europe

Policy insights for increased labour force participation

Context The proportion of single-parent households in Europe has increased substantially in the past two decades. Of these, the vast majority of homes are headed by mothers. Prior research has identified that single-parent households are at much higher risk of poverty as single parenthood impairs pursuing full-time work, a career or educational development. In order to help policymakers create policies that suit the needs of single-parent households in labor market, we investigated the key factors affecting the employment status of single-parent households.

Approach Drawing from the results of the Labour Force Survey (LFS), we aimed to describe and compare the employment status of single parents across multiple factors within the LFS dataset, specifically looking at the employment status, marital status, age, gender and presence of children in households.

Results As of 2010, 16% of homes in Europe were single-mother households. These homes face major challenges in getting employment while providing care for children. Flexible employment opportunities have the largest impact on employment rates for this group, where single mothers are as much as 70% less likely to find full-time employment than single women without children. For countries with flexible work policies in place, single mothers are up to 60% more likely to find full-time employment than countries without such policies.

Insights In order to improve the access to work for single mothers, policymakers should address the following:

POLICY PRIORITIES to increase employment among single mothers

- 1 **Prioritize education, potentially through low-cost online training**
- 2 **Adopt flexible work policies**
- 3 **Improve access to care via a subsidy or day-care programmes**

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Further details on this project available in the following:

Ruggeri, K., & Bird, C. E. (2014). Single parents and employment in Europe. Retrieved from http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR362

Bird, C. E., & Ruggeri, K. (2015). UK and Europe Are Behind the Times for Single Mothers and Their Children, *RAND*.