Definition: single parent from Collins English Dictionary

n
1 a a person who has a dependent child or dependent children and who is widowed, divorced, or unmarried
b (as modifier): a single-parent family Also called (NZ): solo parent

Summary Article: single parent

From The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide

Parent who is responsible for raising children alone. Of single parents, typically 80–90 % are women. Some women choose to have children on their own but the majority become single parents after separation or the death of their partner. Around one in six children in the industrialized world live in single parent households (2010) and levels are high also in parts of Africa (particularly South Africa) and Latin America.

Numbers, UK and USA In the UK, single-parent (lone parent) families increased from 8% of families with children in 1971 to 26% in 2011. In the USA, 27% of children live in single-parent households in 2010, up from 9% in 1960.

UK conditions There were 2 million single-parent households in the UK in 2011, with 3 million children. Children living in single-parent families were twice as likely to be living below the government-defined poverty line as those living in two-parent families: 40% as against 20%. In 2010, nearly 60% of single parents were in work, compared to 45% in 1997. The Child Support Agency (CSA) was set up in 1993 with the aim of delivering a better and fairer system than the previous court-based one for forcing fathers to pay child maintenance support. In 2011, 40% of single parents received maintenance from their child's other parent, but single mothers on income support then have their state benefit reduced accordingly.

Gingerbread, formed in 1970, is the leading national association for single parents in England and Wales. It provides information and advice to lone parents, and to associated organizations, and campaigns on behalf of one-parent families. Over 200 self-help groups are supported.

Problems Bringing up children alone means that there is only one income and only one person to manage the home. This can place stress on the parent and the child, and finding suitable and affordable childcare is often a problem. Many children of single parents suffer emotional and behavioural problems and experience feelings of loss and anger. Children growing up with only one of their biological parents are twice as likely to drop out of school and three times as likely to have a child of their own outside marriage. Children can, however, benefit from increased levels of responsibility.