

The relationship between household structure, poverty and deprivation  
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Abstract for GESIS conference 2013

This paper examines the relationship between household composition and a range of measures of the sufficiency, or otherwise, of people's incomes. The link between household structure and the risk of poverty has been documented in a range of studies (Bane and Ellwood, 1986), with particular attention paid to vulnerable groups, including families with children (Bradbury and Jantti, 1999); young adults (Aassve *et al*, 2007) and older people (Rendall, 1995). However, these studies tend to be restricted to subgroups in society; no study has attempted to document the relationship between household structure and income sufficiency across a wide range of household types, and across all 27 countries of the post-2005 European Union. That is the aim of this paper.

The paper uses data from the EU-SILC, and assesses four measures of disadvantage: two measures of relative income poverty (household income below 50% and 60% of national medians, respectively) and two measures of subjective hardship (income insufficiency and difficulty in making ends meet). We identify those households which are at the greatest risk of poverty and hardship, examining how these risks vary across Europe, and how they vary between the different indicators of disadvantage which we consider.

Although there are large variations between regions, and between countries within regions, in the risk of disadvantage, we find that three groups in particular are at an elevated risk of both poverty and hardship: households consisting of a single retired adult; households consisting of a single adult below retirement age; and lone parent households. However, we point out that social policy should not focus exclusively on these groups because when we consider the poor population as a whole, other groups, notably two-parent families with children, constitute a very large proportion of the poor population.