

Single motherhood in Spain from a comparative perspective

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Main goal

To present some initial and provisional results of a research project, still in progress, “Single mothers in Spain: profiles and welfare strategies”.

Two parts

1-Overview of the project: justification, objective, structure and methodology

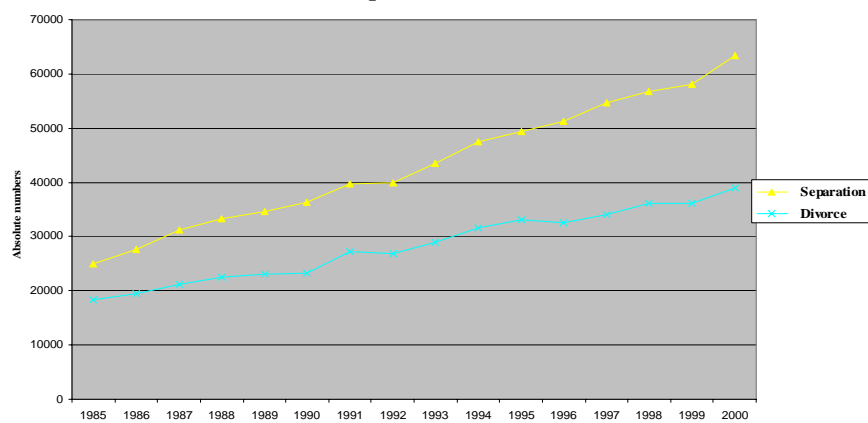
2-Some initial starting points, ideas, results..

- A-Statistical incidence of single parent households in Spain: The confusing data
- B- Basic aspects that all single parent households groups have in common
- C- Differences among single parent households groups
- D-Last comments

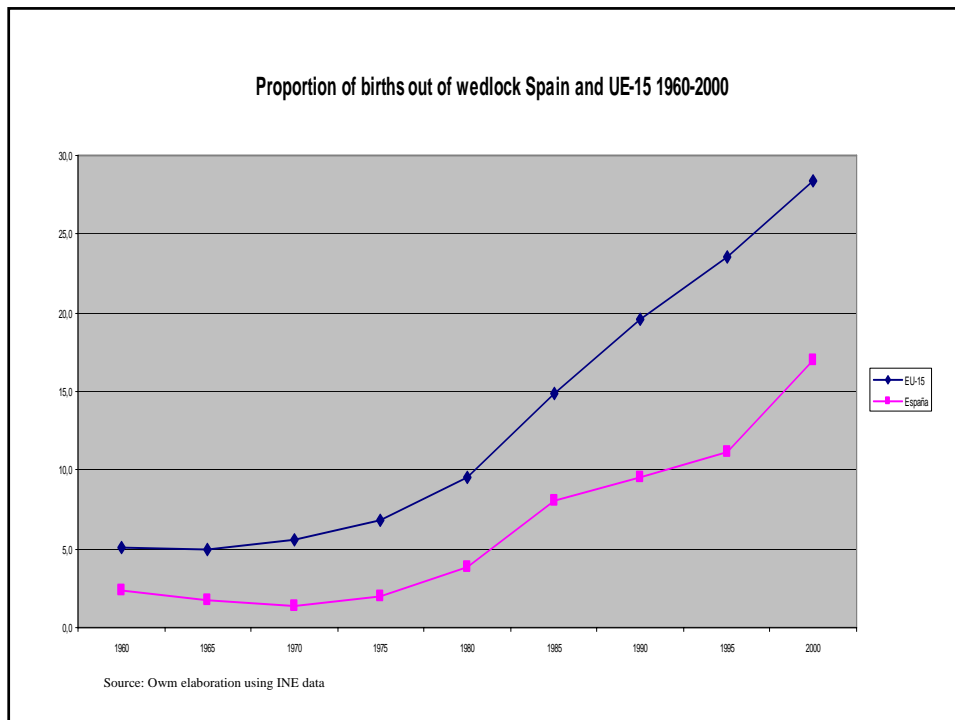
New family scenario in Spain

- Declining frequency of marriages
- Increasing incidence of divorce
- Increasing number of births out of wedlock
- Rise of cohabitation or consensual unions

Separations and divorces
Spain, 1985-2000



Source: Own elaboration using INE data



Consequently

The increasing number of one parent families, mainly headed by a woman, is one of the most important features in the current process of family change in Spain

**SINGLE MOTHERHOOD FORM IS
HERE TO STAY**

Main Goal

Analyse welfare strategies of single motherhood in Spain from a comparative perspective

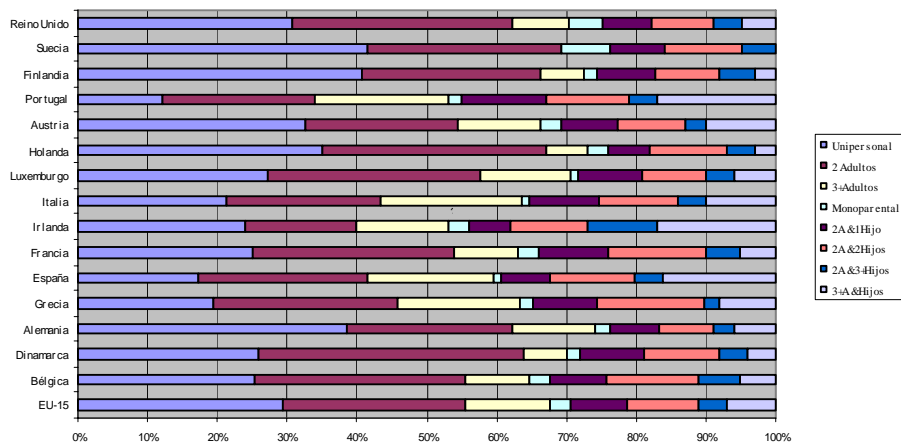
Structure

- Theoretical framework
- Quantitative and descriptive study of the profiles of Spanish lone mothers
- Qualitative study of a group of lone mothers and children in Catalonia
- Analysis of family policy affecting single motherhood from a comparative perspective

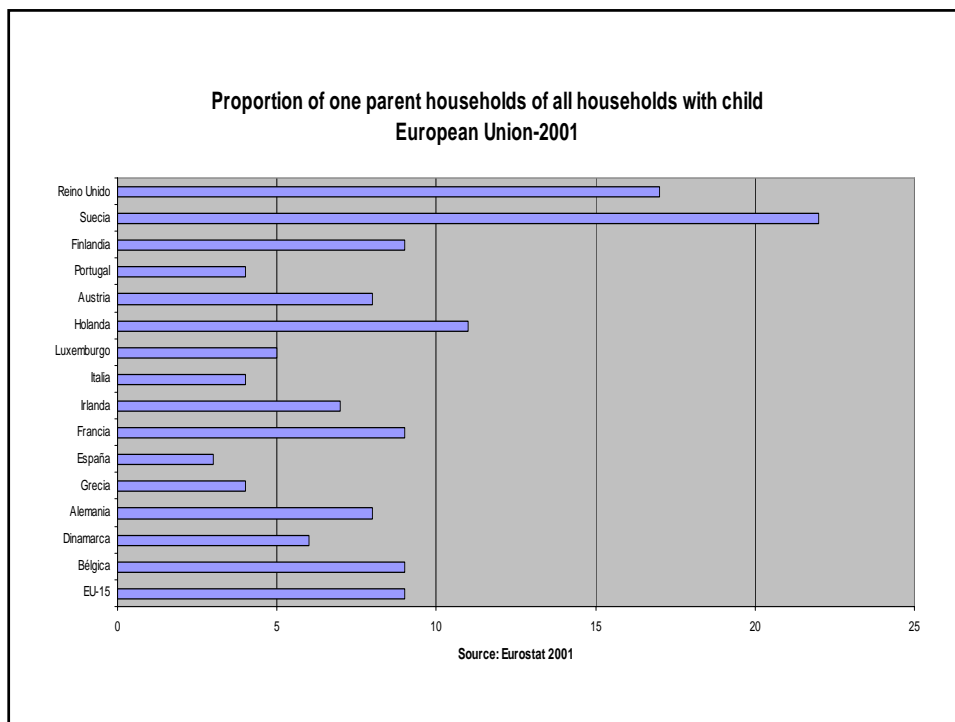
A-Statistical incidence of single parent households in Spain: The confusing data

- **Eurostat:**
 - Lone parent households represent almost 1% of all Spanish households (2001)
 - Lone parent households represent almost 3% of all Spanish households with children (2001)
- **Census 2001 –INE**
 - Lone parent households represent almost 4% of all Spanish households.
 - Lone parent households (simple and complex) represent almost 13% of all households with children

Gráfico 3.8
Porcentaje de hogares según tipo
Unión Europea, 2001



Fuente: "Monoparentalidad y infancia", Flaquer, Almeda, Navarro (2006: La Caixa).Elaboración propia con datos de Eurostat



- **Spanish data includes the “complex lone parent households”**

- complex lone mother households with child below 16:
18,7% of all lone mother households -2001

- 1991-2001: increase of 62,1%

- complex lone father households with child below 16:
25,8% of all lone father households-2001

- 1991-2001: increase 135%

- **Implications for social policy**

B- Basic aspects that all single parent households groups have in common

1- Structure

- An adult or a minor in the role of adult, who has the responsibility of taking care and raising a child
- An under aged person who needs to develop and be autonomous, under the responsibility of an adult
- A social, political, legal and economic relation between these two persons (“paternofilial relationship”).

2-In comparison with two parent families

- One parent families are in worse social, economical, legal and political conditions, have fewer opportunities within the job market, and worse conditions to confront their possibilities in regard to social mobility

Consequently

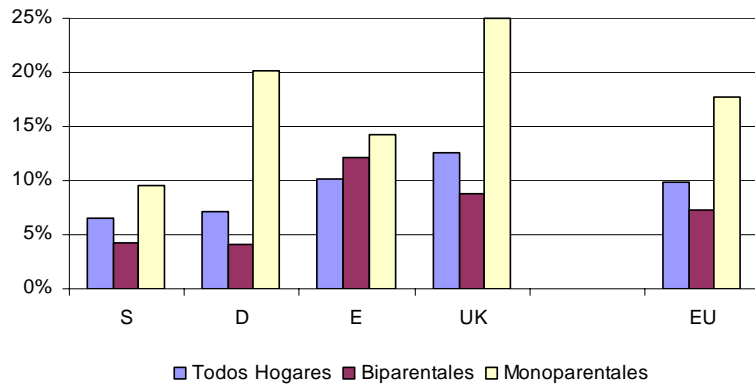
one parent families confront a number of fierce discriminations that make them more vulnerable to increasing social risks and can. end up with a higher probability of falling below the poverty

- **One parent families headed by women** are in worse life conditions than those headed by men

Consequently

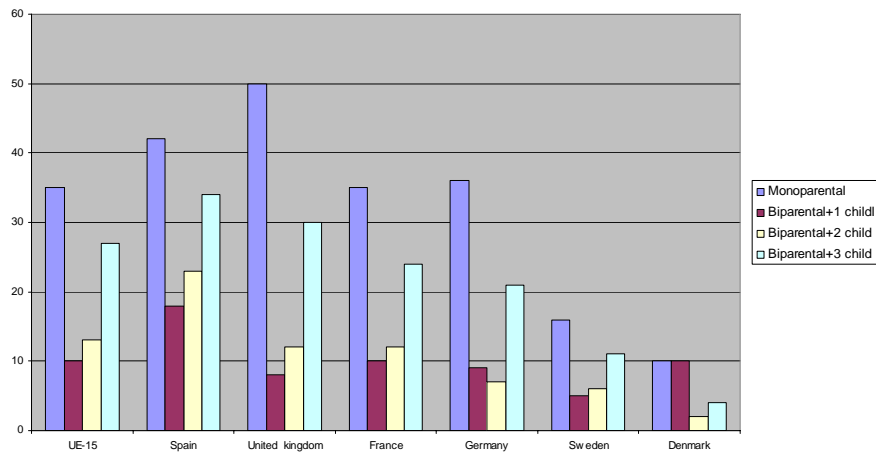
one parent families headed by women end up with a higher probability than those headed by men of falling below the poverty line.

One parent family versus two parent families Poverty rates



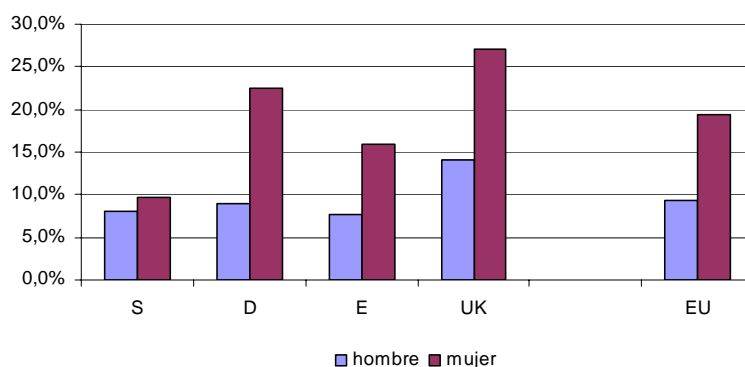
Source: Own elaboration from ECHP Data Base 1998.

Poverty rates and households with dependent children-2001



Source: Own Elaboration from INE Data, 2001

Poverty rates and one parent families by sex



Source: Own elaboration from ECHP Data Base, 1998

3-All one parent family groups headed by a woman faced the following challenges

- the traditional bourgeois nuclear family/ the traditional patriarchal model/ the sexist division of family roles
- the welfare state and public policies in general/the labour market, showing the problems of reconciling paid work, family work and personal time.
- the capitalist system and the consumerism patterns

B-Differences among lone parent households groups

- **Differences** explained by the marital status of lone mothers: traditional categorization of lone mothers groups
- **Differences** explained by other variables regarding lone mother characteristics: nationality, ethnic group, sexual option, age, social class, education, labour status, decision made...

Profiles of lone mothers

•Differences explained by the welfare strategies of the different profiles of lone mothers

Combination of the following factors:

- the income package
 - earnings obtained due to the implication in the labour market
 - earnings obtained from the economic responsibilities assumed by the non resident father
 - the economic support implemented by the state: child benefit/family allowances...
- the family policy package in services
 - family services, child care facilities, nursery schools, day centres for pensioners, day centres for people with disabilities or handicaps, residences, home service assistance for ill or older people...
- the support of the family
- **the support of the social network**

D-Last comments

-lone mother homes have been and still are those who force changes in families and help to make visible the responsibilities of the women in and out of the home, challenging and provoking transformations in the different family units, traditional and modern alike.

-lone mothers are agents of change, and the traditional bourgeois nuclear family have been shaken and cracked because of them.

-lone mother groups are the pushing force behind change, and at the same time they are the first that take charge of the implications of these changes, that are gradually spreading to other modes of family.

-lone mothers are a border case, a frontier case that challenges the new, that allows advances towards the plurality of family, gaining territory step by step upon the traditional sexist family and questioning the functions, roles and inequalities.

THIS IS WORK IN PROGRESS