



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

# Income Support Lone Parent Demographics and Lone Parent Employment Rates

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# Background

The 2013 Spending Round<sup>1</sup> described alterations to support received by Lone Parents in receipt of Income Support (ISLP). This ad-hoc splits the ISLP caseload by demographics using administrative data from the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (November 2012) and presents employment rates for subgroups of all lone parents from the Office of National Statistics' Labour Force Household survey (Q4 2012), to inform future policy design and allow assessment of proposals to alter support.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/209036/spending-round-2013-complete.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/209036/spending-round-2013-complete.pdf) (1.43)

# Analysis

## Gender

Any changes to lone parents are likely to impact both male and female parents. Since 97 per cent<sup>2</sup> of lone parents on Income Support are female, changes will clearly impact on more women than men.

Around 3 in 5 lone mothers are in employment compared to approximately two thirds of lone parents who are male (it should be noted that male lone parents generally care for fewer, older children than lone mothers). The employment rate for lone mothers with a child aged 1-4 years old (41%) is also much lower than that for partnered mothers (64%)<sup>3</sup>.

## Disability

15 per cent of lone parents on income support are recorded as being disabled<sup>4</sup>. The employment rate amongst disabled lone parents is much lower (39%) than the disabled working age population as a whole (47%) and for disabled partnered mothers (55%)<sup>5</sup>. These employment rates can be broken down on the basis of age of the youngest child but the estimates are unreliable due to small sample sizes.

## Age

Table 1 shows age breakdowns for lone parents on Income Support based on the age of their youngest child in November 2012. Overall lone parents with younger children are likely to be younger themselves.

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<sup>2</sup> Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study, Nov 2012

<sup>3</sup> Household Labour Force Survey, Q4 2012

<sup>4</sup> Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study, Nov 2012

<sup>5</sup> Household Labour Force Survey, Q4 2012. The definition of disability includes the following groups: Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and Work Limiting condition, plus DDA only. The population considered are those aged 16-64, which is referred to here as the working-age population, but is not exactly the same.

**Table 1: Lone parent IS claimants: age of lone parent by age of youngest child**

Age of lone parent (years)	Age of youngest child (years)			
	Less than 1	1 - 3	4	5 and over
<b>Under 25</b>	44,200 (52%)	105,300 (38%)	13,300 (20%)	2,100 (3%)
<b>25 – 34</b>	31,900 (38%)	128,800 (46%)	34,900 (51%)	21,700 (28%)
<b>35 – 44</b>	7,600 (9%)	42,700 (15%)	17,100 (25%)	34,000 (44%)
<b>45 and over</b>	400 (0%)	4,000 (0%)	2,700 (4%)	19,200 (25%)

Source: Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study, Nov 2012.

Figures rounded to the nearest 100.

Table 2 shows that the employment rate is lower for younger lone parents. Younger lone parents are also much less likely to be in employment than coupled individuals within the same age group: for example, 51 per cent of lone mothers aged 25 – 34 are in employment, compared to 65 per cent of those who are partnered<sup>6</sup>.

**Table 2: Lone parent: employment rate by age of lone parent**

	Age of lone parent			
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45+
<b>Employment Rate</b>	30%	51%	66%	74%

Source: Household Labour Force Survey, Q4 2012.

## Ethnicity

Fifteen per cent of lone parents on Income Support are from an ethnic minority, compared to 11 per cent of the working age population<sup>7</sup>. The employment rate is lower for ethnic minority lone parents than for non ethnic minority lone parents (55% and 61% respectively)<sup>8</sup>. These employment rates can be broken down on the basis of age of the youngest child but the estimates are unreliable due to small sample sizes.

<sup>6</sup> Household Labour Force Survey, Q4 2012

<sup>7</sup> The figure for lone parents on Income Support is taken from DWP administrative data, whereas the figure for the working age population is taken from the Household Labour Force Survey, Q4, 2012. There may be slight differences in these two data sources on the classification of being from an ethnic minority.

<sup>8</sup> Household Labour Force Survey, Q4 2012