



WORKSHOP

Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families: Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis

Fri, 23 June, 2023 | The University of Melbourne



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and post-separation families:
Challenges and opportunities
in times of crisis

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FACILITATED BY

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The University of Queensland

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The University of Western Australia

9:00am	Welcome
9:15am	Opening Keynotes
10:45am	Morning tea
11:15am	Lived Experience Panel
12:00pm	Life Course Centre Research Snapshots
1:00pm	Lunch
1:45pm	Keynote
2:45pm	Stakeholder Panel
3:30pm	Afternoon tea
3:45pm	Group discussion
4:30pm	Close

WELCOME

Janeen Baxter

The University of Queensland
Director, Life Course Centre

Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families:
Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis



KEYNOTE

Moeata Keil

University of Auckland

Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families:
Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis



“It takes a village to raise a child”: “Caring well” in Pacific post-separation families

Moeata Keil
Sociology
University of Auckland



THE UNIVERSITY OF
AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
NEW ZEALAND

ARTS

Research focus

- Talanoa (i.e., akin to interviews) with 30 Pacific family members of children whose parents have separated and are involved in regular everyday care of children
- Includes: 19 grandmothers, 5 grandfathers, 3 aunties, 1 uncle, 1 cousin and 1 step-mother

What does “caring well” look like in a Pacific post-separation family context?

“Caring well” - Joan Tronto

- Caring about
- Caring for
- Caregiving
- Care-receiving

TRONTO, J. C. (2015). *Who Cares?: How to Reshape a Democratic Politics* (1st ed.). Cornell University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt18kr598>

Care in times of transition – security and stability

There's a real trust issue of, 'is mumma picking me up, is daddy coming?' You could see [my grandson] was already fretting before he went to school ... I said to [my daughter and her former partner], "We all need to work together on this ... He needs to know what's going on, who's picking him up and they need to be on time too! ... It's the certainty and the security of knowing ... I try to create that 'normal' ... just some stability. I try as best as I can to give them a routine and tell my daughter that they *need* a routine right now, they can't be in the middle of all of your mess.
(Grandmother, 3 and 4 year old grandchildren).

Care in times of transition – security and stability

“everything is so unknown, they still have the family home and my daughter is sometimes there and sometimes not there. I feel for the kids, because they have no idea what to expect, they can't expect anything because even the parents don't know what's going on. ... They [i.e., parents] are trying their best ... So I try to be keep things 'normal' [for the children].”
(Grandmother, 6 and 9 year old grandchildren)

Collective caring ecosystem

My daughter was struggling after the separation, she cried and was worried about the kids, you know stuffing them up. ... I wasn't going to pressure them they can make the choice themselves. ... I'm her father, I want to protect her, I wish I could protect her from all of this, it's hard. ... So we just do all that we can ... we pick up the kids and drop them home with a full belly. (Grandfather, 3, 5 and 12 year old grandchildren)

Continuity of care – consistency and predictability

They've got a room here, they come in and it's home to them, they come in and they help themselves, grab the toys, make their mess, run around. ... I go pick up my grandson and then we go together and get his sister. ... I did explain to my son-in-law [about continuing to have my grandchildren after school] even when they separated [and it was his days to have them]. He wanted to put them in [afterschool care] but I begged him, saying it's a waste of money and at least they can be here with me, they are happy here It's taken [time] to get to the point where I think I can breathe ... and say, 'thank God the dust is settling'.

Caring *for* & Caring *about*

I saw everyday the struggle that my daughter was going through, she lost weight, I think she was depressed. She didn't really want to talk too much about it, she was trying to work everything out and I didn't pressure or ask too many questions, she kept a lot to herself. ... I had to give her that space. ... So I was just there for the kids. ... she'd come home late ... and I'd say, "They've had dinner, they've already [bathed], they're already in bed"

“Family glue”

- Manage and mitigate post-separation family dynamics

““the glue that stuck the family together”

- Caring well: what we do as Pacific people

Concluding Comments

The slide features a solid blue background. A large white rounded rectangle is positioned on the left side, containing the text 'Concluding Comments'. A light blue horizontal bar with rounded ends extends from the right edge of the white rectangle across the bottom of the slide.

KEYNOTE

Kay Cook

Swinburne University of Technology

Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families:
Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis



FINANCIAL ABUSE

The Weaponisation of Child Support in Australia

Kay Cook, Adrienne Byrt, Rachael Burgin,
Terese Edwards, Ashlea Coen, Georgina Dimopoulos

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BUR
NE



National Council for Single
Mothers and their Children

Report available:

<https://doi.org/10.26185/72DY-M137>

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We also acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands across Australia on which the survey participants and readers of this report may be located.

These lands were never ceded and always were and always will be Aboriginal land.

We thank the 540 participants who took part in the survey.

12 things you should know about child support

- 1** Child support is compulsory for most single parents
- 2** Up to 15% of parents fail the compulsory test
- 3** Services Australia determines the amount of child support to be paid
- 4** Services Australia or parents can collect payments
- 5** Half of all parents collect child support privately
- 6** Private collect is assumed to be paid on time and in full without any arrears
- 7** Child support income reduces family tax benefit payments by 50c for every dollar
- 8** If you collect privately, family payments are reduced irrespective of whether you received child support
- 9** There is currently \$1.7 billion in unpaid child support – for the half collecting via Services Australia
- 10** Child support liabilities can be changed retrospectively, which can lead to family tax benefit overpayments
- 11** Services Australia accepts 'provisional' and estimated income.
- 12** Resident parents are responsible for enacting the system but have very little power within it



According to the Department of Social Services (DSS, 2022b; 2022c):

774,213 cases

were in the Child Support Scheme in the 2021-2022 financial year

88%

of payees are female

85%

of parents passed the Maintenance Action Test, including 14 per cent who were exempt and one per cent whose outcome was pending

50%

of cases are Private Collect and 50 per cent are Agency Collect

\$54,125

Payers in Private Collect have \$6,000 higher annual incomes than payers in Agency Collect

\$33,961

Payees in Private Collect have \$2,000 lower annual incomes than payees in Agency Collect

Child support can legally be minimised by payers reducing their taxable incomes. This reduces the extent to which children share in the resources of both of their parents.

20%

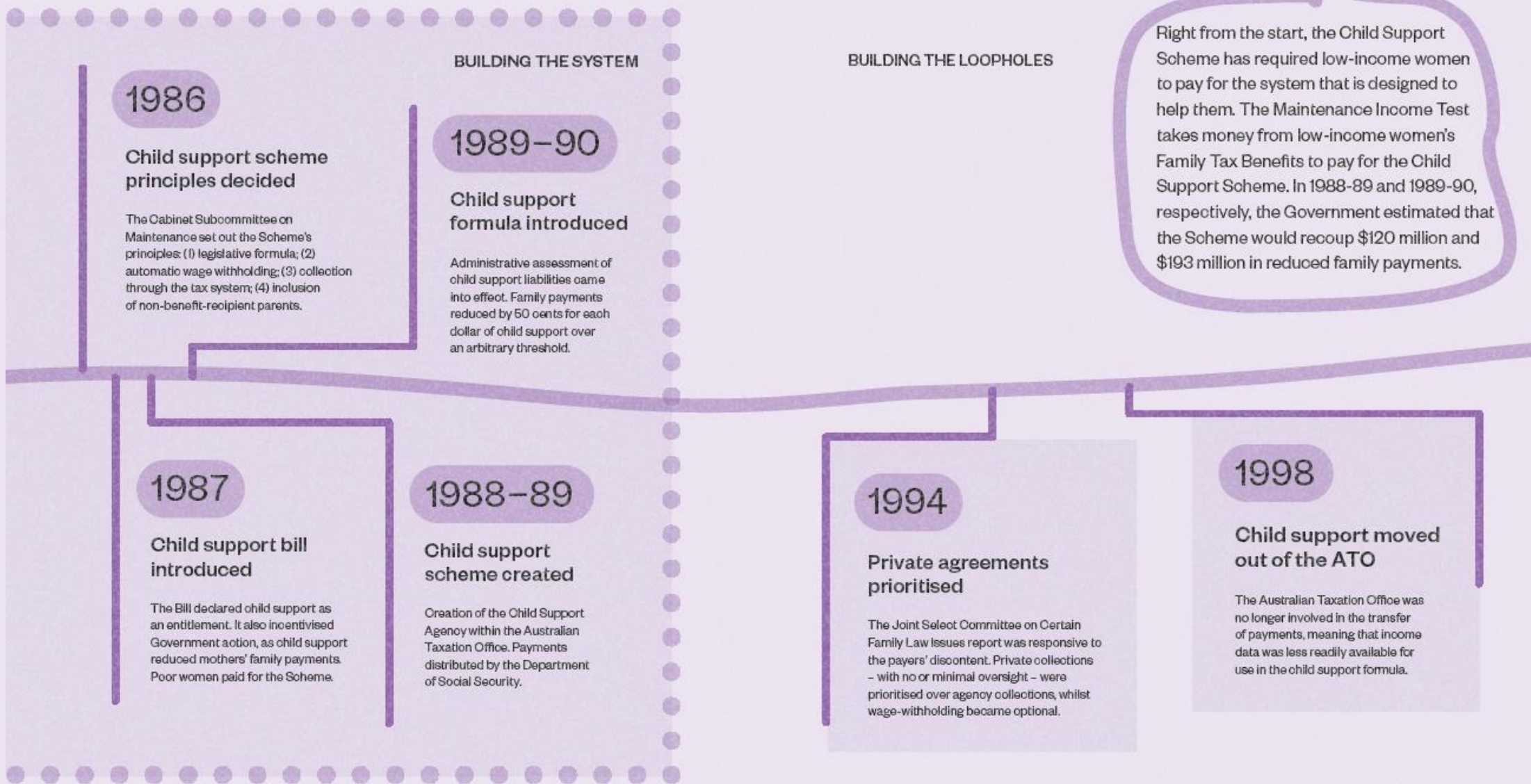
of child support cases are for the minimum amount of child support, which is currently \$320 per annum; 27 per cent of cases are for less than \$500 per annum

22%

of payers had child support calculated using a method other than an Australian Tax Office return

Loopholes that can be weaponised

Over time, changes to child support and family payments have created loopholes that can be weaponised by malicious ex-partners to enact financial abuse.



The Government has admitted that the 2017 Family Tax Benefit Part A change 'limits the right to social security' but claims that the measure was necessary and proportionate.



2003

Women ignored by the Standing Committee

The House of Representatives Standing Committee inquiry did not address compliance, and ignored concerns of payees, instead recommending the appointment of a Taskforce to consider a new 'fairer' formula.

2005

'Fairer' formula a win for high-income payers, and a loss for low-income

A Ministerial Taskforce of six men and two women appointed to design a new 'fairer' formula.

2008

'Fairer' formula created levers for abuse

The 'fairer' formula was implemented. It benefitted high income men and made low-income payees worse off. Each dollar of parental income and night of overnight care became battlegrounds for manipulating child support.

2017

Family Tax Benefit overpayments vigorously pursued

When payers' incomes are retrospectively recalculated after a late tax return, Private Collect payees must pay back 'overpaid' FTBA. This would save the Government \$23 million in Family Tax Benefit Part A.

2006

Payers got more control over spending

Child support payers were given more opportunity to direct how child support payments could be spent by recipients, in some cases even without agreement

Welfare to work introduced for single parents

New benefit recipients with a youngest child over 8 moved onto lower Newstart (now JobSeeker) from Parenting Payment Single, which makes Family Tax Benefit Part A income more important for financial security

2013

Mothers lost out when fathers missed tax returns

The Government changed the method for estimating payer income where no tax return was lodged. This resulted in mothers' Family Tax Benefit Part A being reduced by \$78.7m over four years.

Mutual obligations requirement extended to all single parents with children over 8

All existing Parenting Payment Single recipients were required to seek work and moved onto Newstart (now Jobseeker), which reduced mothers' payments.

The study



- Online survey
- 1 December 2022 – 31 January 2023
- 540 participants
- Child support, family violence, financial abuse



The participants



99%

identified as female



96%

were single, sole or re-partnered parents with a dependent child under 18



81%

received a family payment, including those who also received wages or salary



5%

of mothers, and 6 per cent of their children, identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



64%

were the main carer of their child(ren)



70%

had a child support agreement in place



88%

of women respondents had experienced
someone controlling their money or finances,
occurring over years or decades.





80%

of women reported that their ex-partner
**had replaced physical abuse with financial
abuse via child support** as a way to
control them since they separated.

64%

experienced the deliberate withholding of child support

84%

of women who have experienced financial abuse in the last year also experienced the deliberate withholding of child support

91%

of women who are currently experiencing financial abuse also experienced the deliberate withholding of child support

“Doesn't pay and results in not being able to give children things they need. Non-payment will result in a debt by Centrelink as I'm on disbursement otherwise I won't survive financially.”

“Uses identified men's rights activists' actions to avoid parental responsibilities. Lodges tax return early and sets the CSA schedule so that my actual income isn't applied in the assessment, and I am disadvantaged always, CSA won't recognise financial abuse.”

“He contacts cs [child support] and lies about his capacity to pay even though his tax return showed he was on \$240k, I had to pay all the money paid to me back to him and from then on he didn't pay or do tax returns.”

“He still has many years of tax not done so I limit using the CS [child support money] in case I get a FTB debt one day. I already have 1 FTB debt because of this exact reason.”

Impact of financial abuse on women's lives



79%

Contending with an increase in anxiety and stress



64%

Had to stop socialising with friends and family



64%

Having to ask for help from friends and/or family



60%

Forgone medical appointments and or medication for self



60%

Cannot afford dental care



53%

Struggle to provide the basics each fortnight



52%

Cannot afford preventative health care



51%

Forced to seek support from charities, emergency relief providers

Recommendations

1

Close the loopholes that allow child support to be minimised or not paid

Rules that prioritise payer autonomy over payee safety or place the burden of a payer's non-compliance on the payee need to be removed. The onus should be on the payer to do the right thing.

2

Decouple social security from child support

The government must stop forcing the poorest mothers experiencing financial insecurity to 'contribute' to the cost of running the Child Support Scheme through reduced Family Tax Benefit payments.

Recommendations

3

Compel child support payers to lodge tax returns

Ensuring timely tax returns will ensure that mothers and children receive their correct entitlements, and do not become liable for the payment of government debts as a result of the actions of an ex-partner.

4

Encourage and reward child support payment by linking non-compliance to payer's credit ratings

A greater incentive would be to include child support compliance in the calculation of consumer credit scores.

Recommendations

5

Introduce a child support guarantee, paid by Services Australia when payers do not make payments.

A guaranteed child support payment, paid by the Government, is a practical option for women who are affected by family and domestic violence. The Government – rather than individual women – could be the child support payee in such cases, continuing to seek collection and enforce compliance of the payer, to ensure that violent ex-partners are not rewarded for their abusive behaviour.

An opportunity for reform

- Government response to the Joint Select Committee Inquiry into Australia's Family Law System
 - Agreed to make changes to the Child Support Scheme to improve women's safety, financial security and income certainty
- Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee
 - Recommended that the Maintenance Income Test be removed to decouple FTBA and child support
- Women's Budget Statement 2023-24
 - Committed to removing opportunities for financial abuse to be perpetrated through the Child Support Scheme

FINANCIAL ABUSE

The Weaponisation of Child Support in Australia

Kay Cook, Adrienne Byrt, Rachael Burgin,
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National Council for Single
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Report available:

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LIVED EXPERIENCE PANEL

Vesna Romic, Renee Rainbow, Angela Finch & Juanita Frost

Moderated by Terese Edwards
CEO, Single Mother Families Australia Incorporated

Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families:
Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis



Life Course Centre
RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

Guyonne Kalb

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From Partnered to Single: Financial Security over a Lifetime

Barbara Broadway and Guyonne Kalb

Presentation for the Life Course Centre Workshop

'Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families: Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis' – 23 June 2023

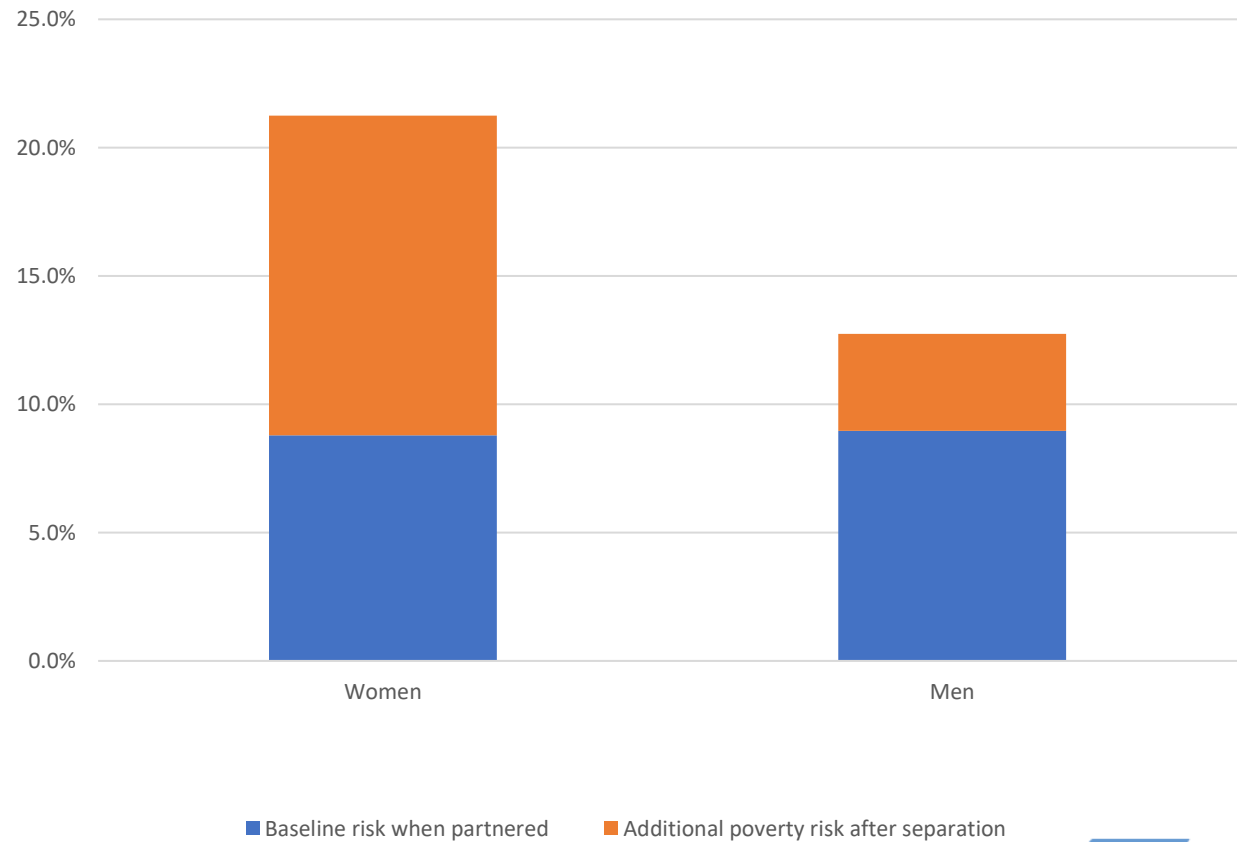


Data and Method

- HILDA Survey Waves 1 to 19
- Number of separated individuals: 1754
- Window of observation: 2 years before separation, and 1-5 years after
 - Compare income, poverty risk and employment up to five years after separation, with same outcomes before separation
 - Compare to continuously partnered individuals over the same time-frame
- At separation, we account for
 - sex, presence of children, age of youngest child
 - own and partners' labour market status and income (detailed history), relationship history,
 - age, education, migrant status, health (current)

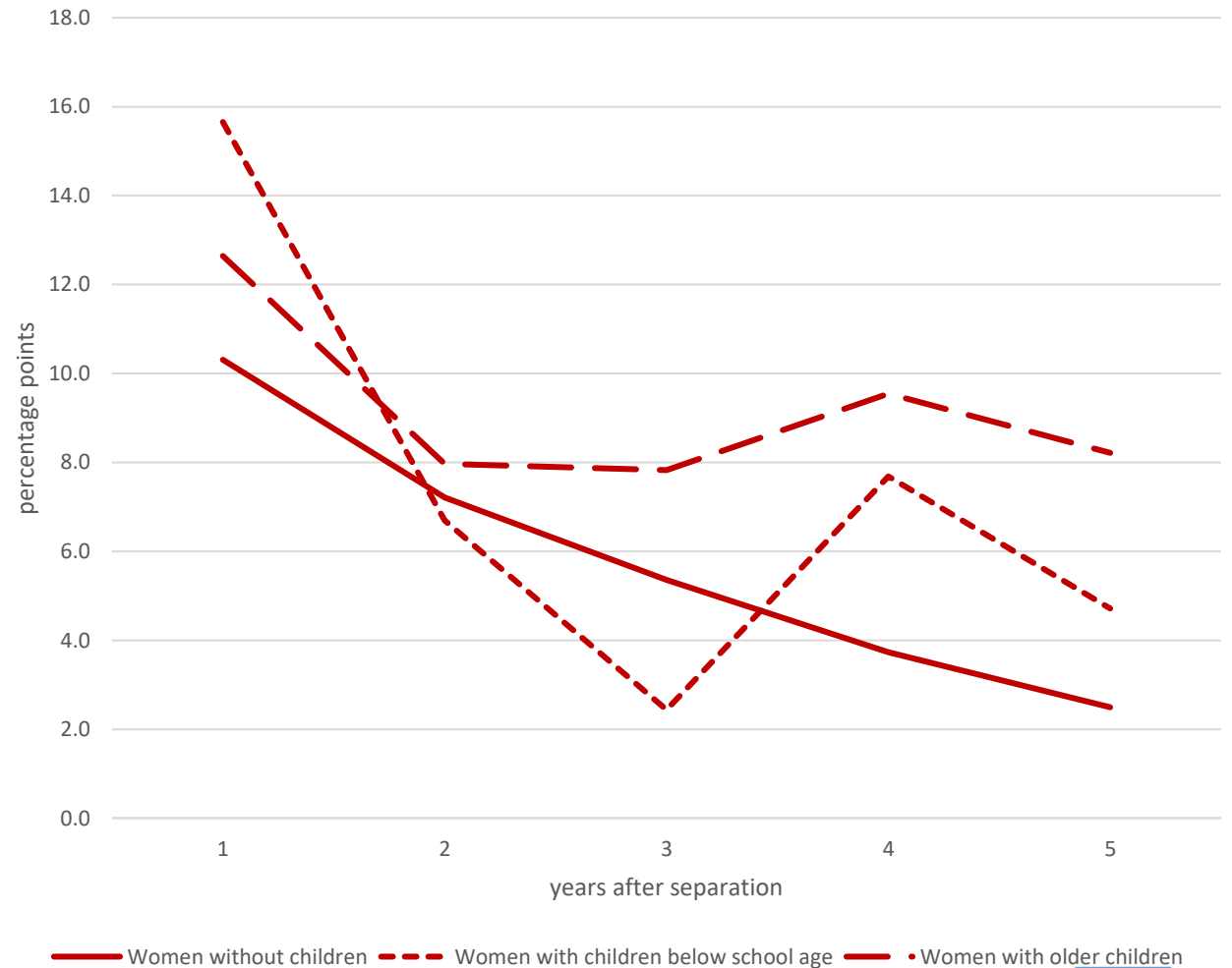
1. Effect of separation on poverty risk

Source: Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, waves 1-19, authors' own calculations. Notes: the figure shows by how much the risk of living in poverty increases if women (aged 15 to 62) separate, relative to comparable women who stay partnered. Results are estimated, accounting for individual and partner's labour market history, income, education, and other characteristics. For more information on sample restrictions and estimation method, see Broadway et al. (2022)



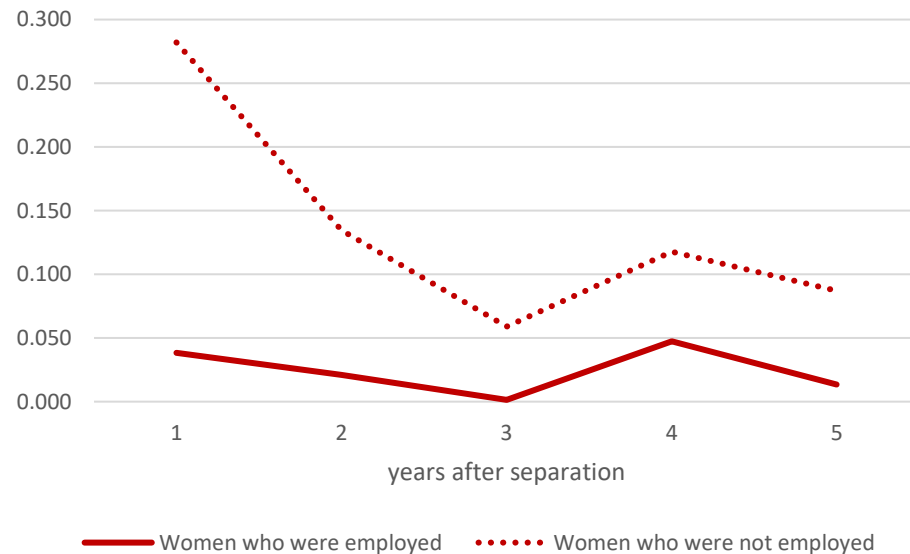
1. Added poverty risk by age of children

Source: Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, waves 1-19, authors' own calculations. Notes: the figure shows by how much the risk of living in poverty increases if women (aged 15 to 62) separate, relative to comparable women who stay partnered. Results are estimated, accounting for individual and partner's labour market history, income, education, and other characteristics. For more information on sample restrictions and estimation method, see Broadway et al. (2022)

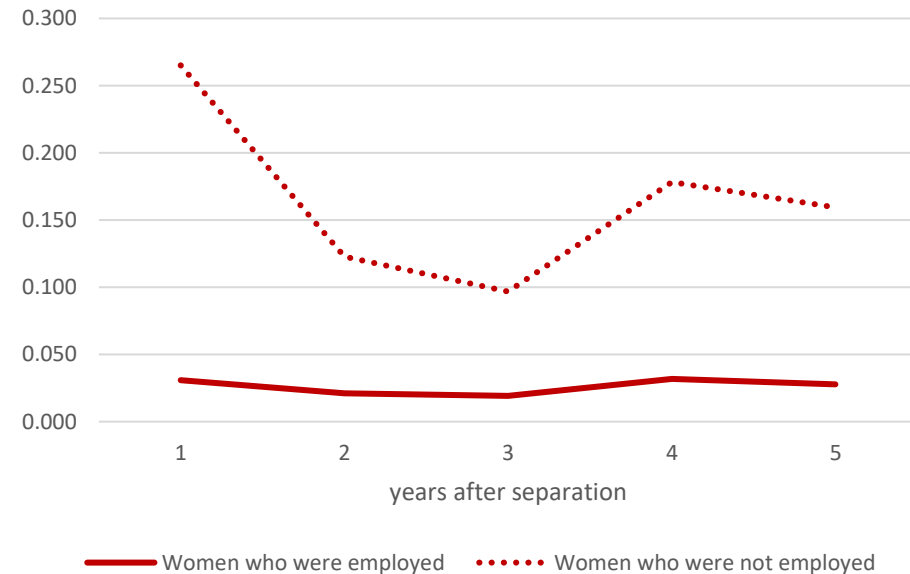


2. Effect of separation on poverty: the role of employment before separation

Women with children aged 0 to 4



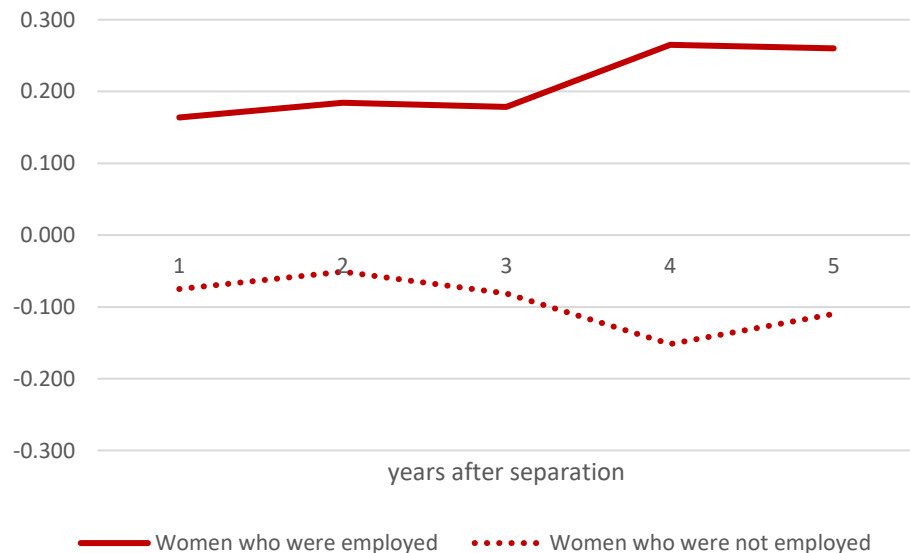
Women with children aged 5 to 15



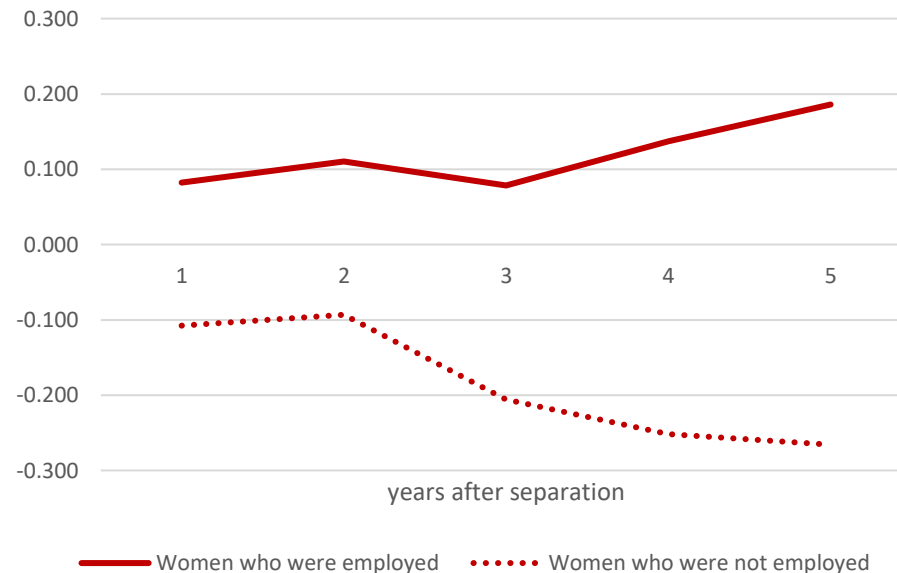
Source: Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, waves 1-19, authors' own calculations. Notes: the figure shows by how much the probability of being in poverty increases if women (aged 15 to 62) separate relative to comparable women who stay partnered. Results are estimated, accounting for individual and partner's labour market history, income, education, and other characteristics. Results are presented separately by the age of children present at separation, and the separating mother's employment status one year earlier. For more information on sample restrictions and estimation method, see Broadway et al. (2022)

3. Effect of separation on employment: the role of employment before separation

Women with children aged 0 to 4



Women with children aged 5 to 15



Source: Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, waves 1-19, authors' own calculations. Notes: the figure shows by how much the probability of being employed increases if women (aged 15 to 62) separate relative to comparable women who stay partnered. Results are estimated, accounting for individual and partner's labour market history, income, education, and other characteristics. Results are presented separately by the age of children present at separation, and the separating mother's employment status one year earlier. For more information on sample restrictions and estimation method, see Broadway et al. (2022)



Post-separation poverty and employment: result of pre-separation employment

Conundrum: Women who were not employed before separation

- are most likely to be poor after separation
- -> have the greatest *need* for increased employment
- but face a *negative* effect of separation on employment



Implications

1) Timing: employment must be encouraged early – not after separation

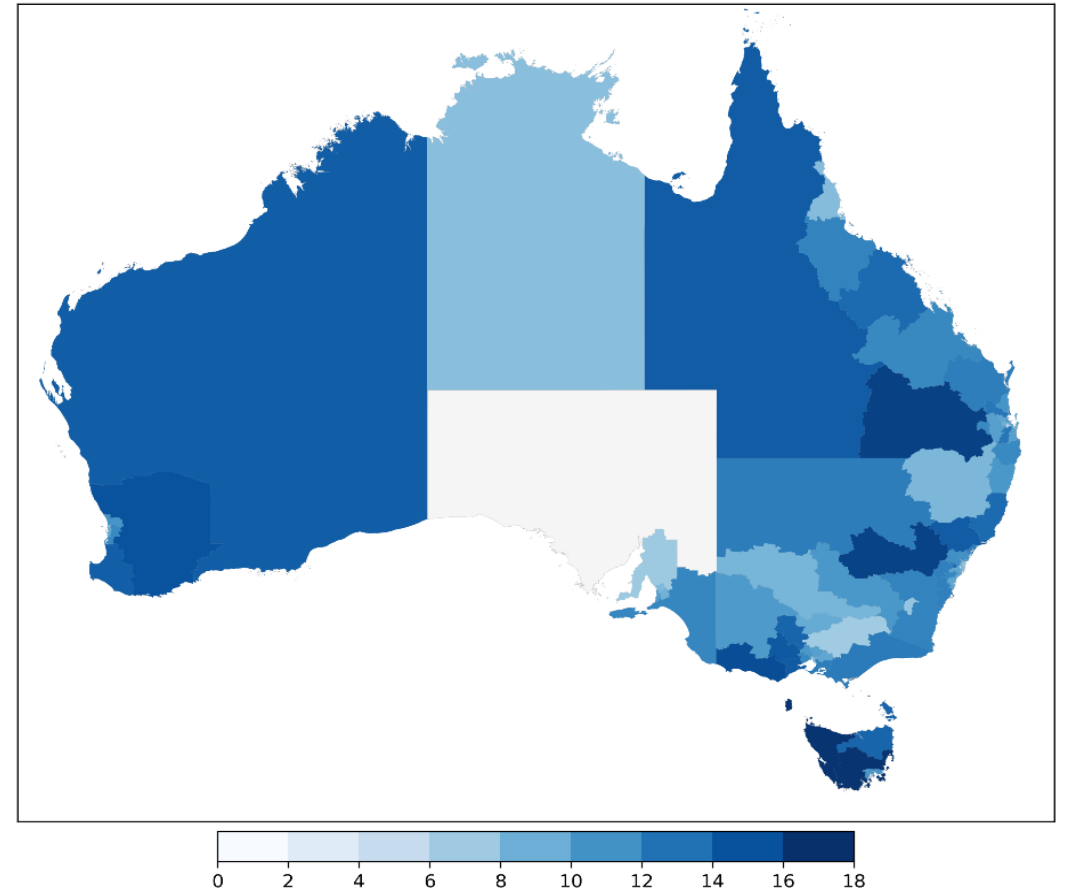
- Parental Leave Pay and increased childcare subsidies over time steps in right direction
- Childcare access still problematic
- Family Tax Benefit – Part B for partnered parents problematic

2) Must assess effective marginal tax rates: totality of income support system, child support payments and childcare cost

- Payment rates and taper rates
- Multitude of payments, plus child support and childcare cost
- → Total effects opaque

Thank you for your attention

4. Regional variation in added poverty risk (women)



Source: Australian Census Longitudinal Data (ACL), 2006-11-16 and 2011-16. Authors' own calculations. Notes: the map shows the increase in the probability of entering poverty for separated women who were not poor pre-separation, relative to comparable women who were not poor and stayed partnered, by pre-separation region of residence. For more information on sample restrictions and estimation method, see Broadway et al. (2022)



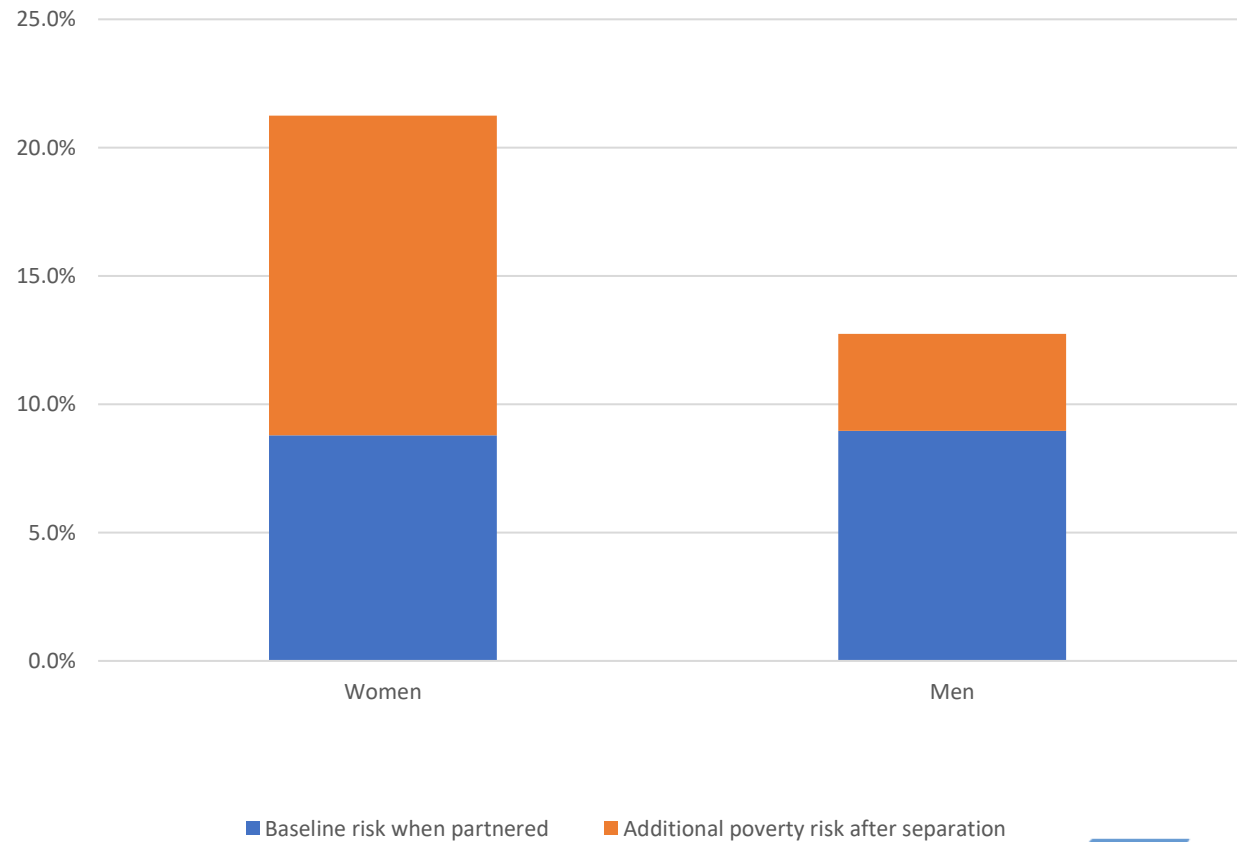
Implications

Consider local conditions, on their own and in interaction with federal policies

- Differences childcare availability - Hurley et al. (2022)
- Differences in employment opportunities
- Differences in income support reliance → problems in income support design more prevalent where it is used more

1. Effect of separation on poverty risk

Source: Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, waves 1-19, authors' own calculations. Notes: the figure shows by how much the risk of living in poverty increases if women (aged 15 to 62) separate, relative to comparable women who stay partnered. Results are estimated, accounting for individual and partner's labour market history, income, education, and other characteristics. For more information on sample restrictions and estimation method, see Broadway et al. (2022)





Implication

Men and women lose after separation – and it cannot be any other way

- Separation increase total living expenses for the whole family unit
- If household is close to poverty line before separation, more money is needed to prevent poverty afterwards
- Income support payments need to be high enough, but they are often not

Vera-Toscano and Wilkins (2022) [BDB Report 4, MI](#)

[Poverty lines, MI](#)

Life Course Centre
RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

Ella Kuskoff

The University of Queensland
Research Fellow, Life Course Centre

Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families:
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Of Good Mothers and Violent Fathers

Findings from the Keeping Families Together Evaluation

Ella Kuskoff | Cameron Parsell | Christine Ablaza | Francisco Perales | Andrew Clarke | Stefanie Plage

What does KFT involve?



HOUSING MARKET

Demand for housing is increasing, as are rents and experiences of housing stress.

RESOURCES

The cost of housing means access is particularly difficult for families with fewer resources.

FAMILY WELLBEING

Not having safe and secure housing negatively impacts family health and wellbeing.

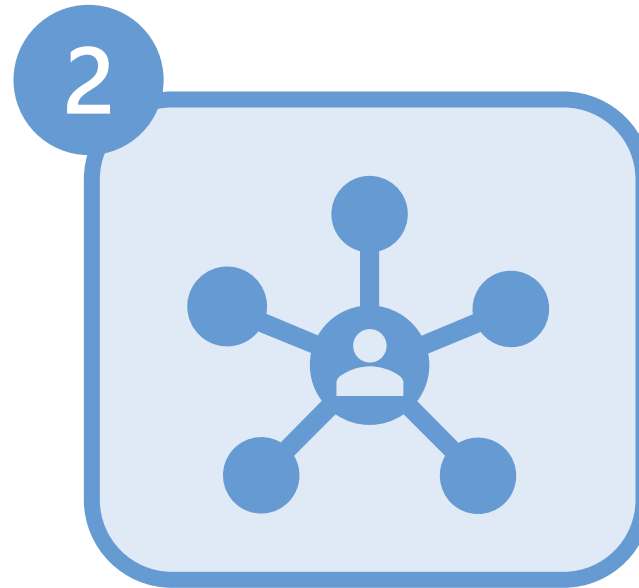
CHILD SAFETY

Not having safe and secure housing can motivate and sustain child safety intervention.

What does KFT involve?



**Access to subsidised
and secure housing**



**Intensive support to
help maintain tenancies**



**Collaborative work to
achieve family aims**

Who participated in KFT?

Twenty Brisbane families who:

- Had at least one child under age 5,
- Were homeless or at risk of homelessness,
- Were on extremely low income,
- Were on the waitlist for social housing
- Were engaged or at risk of engaging with Child Safety

Who participated in KFT?



79%
of families were
headed by a
single mother



79%
of mothers
reported
experiencing DFV













100%
of parents were
homeless when
they entered



82%
of families
engaged with
child protection

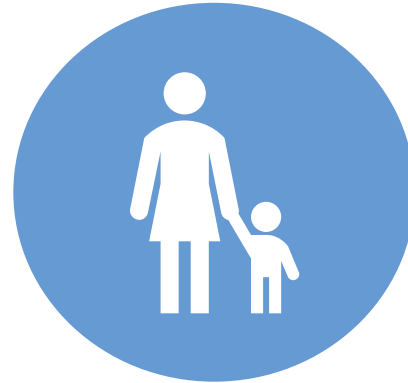
What data did we access?

		Data Type	n=	Description	Collection Point (months since program entry)													
					0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
QUALITATIVE		INTERVIEWS with families	17	Semi-structured interviews about families' experiences.				●	—	—	—	●						
		INTERVIEWS with practitioners	10	Semi-structured interviews about service delivery.		●	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	●	
		INTERVIEWS with CSOs	7	Semi-structured interviews about child protection.									●	—	—	●		
QUANTITATIVE		ASSESSMENT VI-SPDAT	18	Demographic characteristics, vulnerabilities and needs.	X													
		ASSESSMENT Full SPDAT	18	Vulnerability, wellness, risks, and daily functioning.	X						X							
		ASSESSMENT Where am I at?	19	Self-perceptions of parenting capacity and needs.	X				X				X					
		ASSESSMENT Ages & Stages	19	Children's developmental milestones and needs.	X				X				X					
		ASSESSMENT KFT Review	19	Interactions with child protection and support needs.	X				X				X					
		ASSESSMENT AIHW Reporting	19	Major changes in families' lives and support provided.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
		ADMINISTRATIVE Tenancy Records	19	Tenancy issues families experienced.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				

What were the outcomes?



- ↑ Increased feelings of stability
- ↑ Increased feelings of safety
- ↓ Decreased feelings of being controlled by partners
- ↓ Decreased feelings of fear



- ↑ Increased confidence as parents
- ↑ Increased knowledge of child development
- ↑ Increased knowledge of positive parenting



- ↑ Increased school and day care attendance
- ↑ Increased motor skills
- ↑ Increased problem solving skills

DIRECT

We weren't necessarily really investigating Mum, because it was about concerns about Dad's household. (Ava, Child safety)

Because she's been home invaded by one of her perpetrators before and bashed severely. (Hannah, Support worker)

Often Child Safety, historic concerns of the family might be DV, and although there's housing and support and parenting support in place, that still can continue on. (Lily, Support worker)



INDIRECT

Housing is such a big issue ... families can stay in an abusive relationship because they've got nowhere to go and their last resort is the refuge and they don't want to go down that road. So they stay. (Charlotte, Child safety)

A lot of the challenges that you have when you've got mothers that have left violent situations ... is they don't necessarily have that long term, safe housing. (Ruby, Child safety)



[Child safety] come in straight away when she was born ... I was like, "Hold on a minute. [The father's] not even here. He wasn't even at the birth." ... And it wasn't even about me, which was really frustrating ... They took her straight off ...

Her dad does know where I live now. He spotted me in [the local] shopping centre and he shoved letters in my mailbox ...

I got really shitty there at one point with Child Safety. I was like, youse have nothing on me and she doesn't have any contact with him at all. He hasn't seen her since she was six months old, almost a year-and-a-half, and I just want it to end.

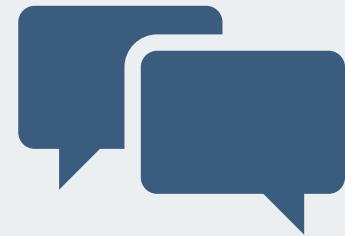
(Jessica, Mother)



I'm not living at home at the moment ... There's actually DV concerns, where my eldest's dad knows where I am ... KFT said they don't have any information on what the goes are with the leases or where they could put me and whatnot until the lease ends.

With my eldest's dad, yes [there is a DVO] ... They've actually funded a lady, she helps with the court.

(Hazel, Mother)



Final points

1

Mothers were expected to control things that were beyond their control

2

Mothers went out of their way to protect their children to the best of their ability, yet this often went unrecognised

3

Fathers were rarely held responsible for their actions

4

KFT was invaluable for mothers, but did not fully mitigate the risk posed by violent fathers

5

More must be done to engage violent fathers in child safety systems and hold them responsible both as parents and as users of violence

Life Course Centre
RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

Alice Campbell

The University of Queensland
Research Fellow, Life Course Centre

Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families:
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Single mothers and the Gender Trap

Dr Alice Campbell

LCC Research Fellow

University of Queensland

Gender Trap: A feminist sociological framework





Gender-based violence

- A material process of the gender structure
- Enabled and reinforced by other cultural and material processes of the gender structure operating at the individual, interactional and macro levels
- Functions to (re)produce women's unfreedom and men's privilege

Unfreedom

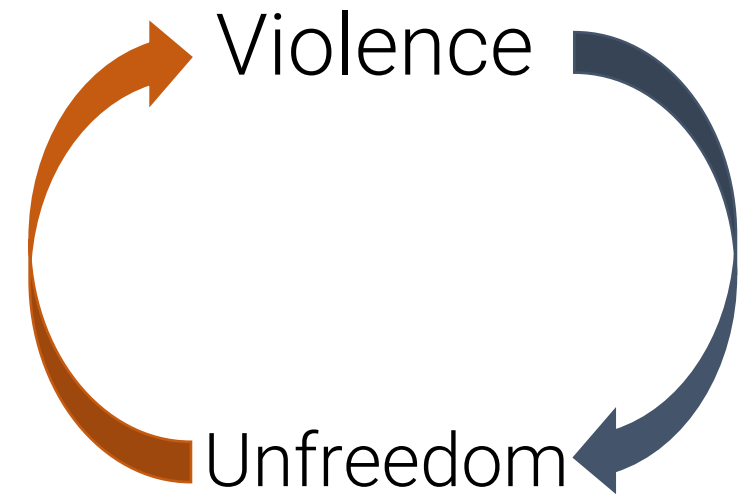
- A state of limited agentic power: an inability to act from one's values, desires and best interests **independently of structural constraints**
- Creates the conditions for exploitation
- Not just experienced subjectively, it has a strong material basis
- Can be measured drawing on the multidimensional poverty framework

Coercive control

- Chronic pattern of behaviours including non-injurious assaults and other forms of abuse (e.g., sexual degradation, threats, social isolation, economic abuse, public humiliation)
- A highly gendered crime
- Enabled by the cultural and material processes of the gender structure in very clear ways
- Described by Stark (2007) as a “liberty crime” – designed to trap women in a condition of unfreedom

Life course perspective

- Looking longitudinally, we see cycles of violence in some women's lives
- Our framework proposes that women's unfreedom is the crucial link in these cycles
- The gender trap operates at both individual and collective levels



Gender Trap: the evidence





Data

Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health

Women born 1989–1995

Survey years (waves): 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019

Analytic sample = 52,762 observations from 11,088 young women

Ages 18–29

Past-year intimate partner violence (IPV)

Group	Description
None	No abusive behaviours reported
IPV with no/low coercive control	1–2 abusive behaviours reported
IPV with moderate coercive control	3–5 abusive behaviours reported
IPV with high coercive control	6+ abusive behaviours reported

- Point prevalence of high coercive control = 1.1–1.5% for each survey
- Period prevalence of high coercive control = 4.9%

Unfreedom: Multidimensional poverty (MDP)

Sum of scores across
five domains:

1. Material
2. Employment
3. Education
4. Social
5. Health

Group	Score	% PY obs
None	<1	
Marginal MDP	1–1.99	
Deep MDP	2–2.99	
Very Deep MDP	3–5	

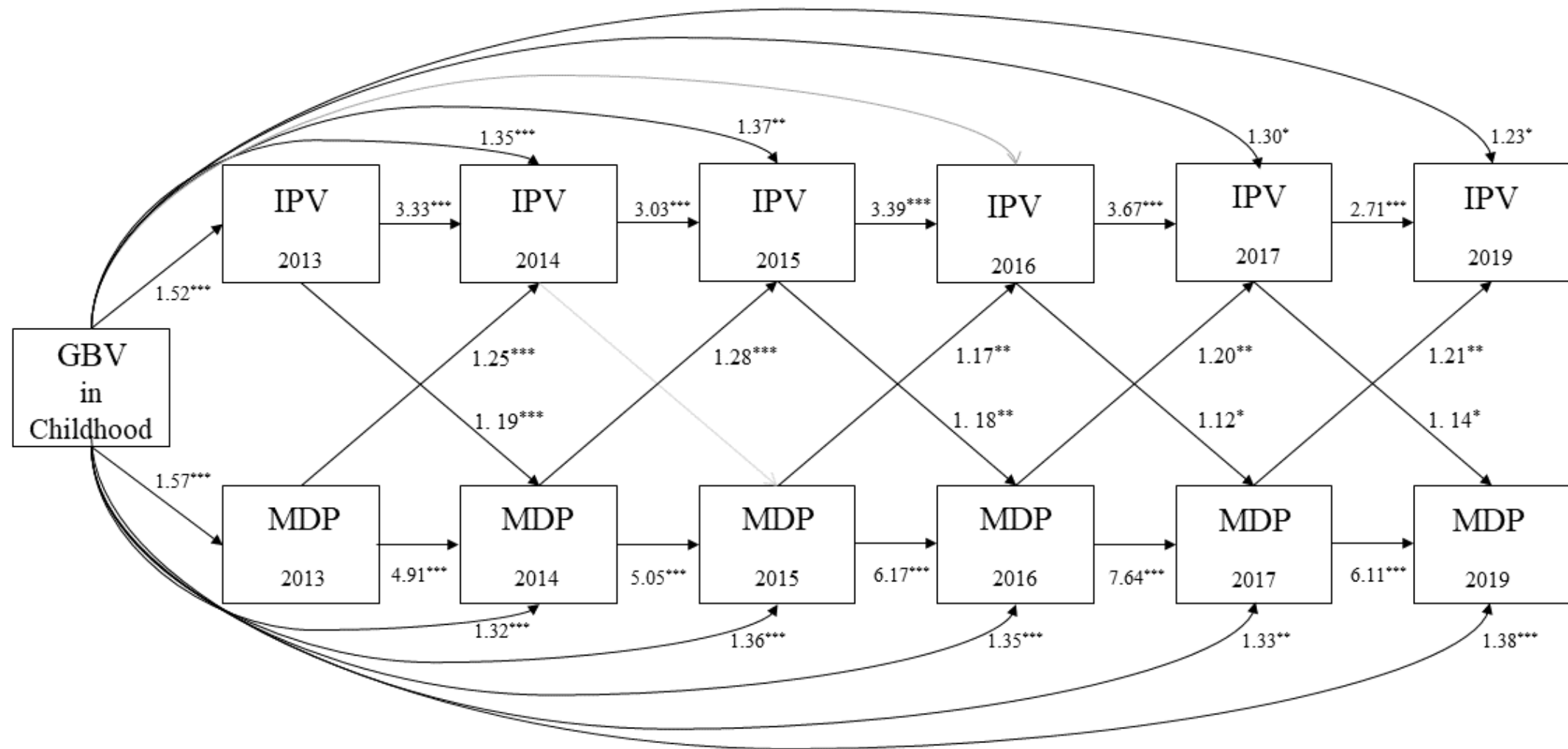


Model

- Cross-lagged (ordered logistic) regressions in SEM framework

We found strong evidence for the Gender Trap:

- More severe IPV in any one wave predicted more severe unfreedom (MDP) in the next wave
- More severe unfreedom in any one wave predicted more severe IPV in the next wave



We know that many single mothers are single because they have fled violence (e.g., Anne Summers' report released in 2022)

Single Motherhood

There is no inherent reason why being single, being a mother, or being both of these things at once should increase women's unfreedom. If this association exists, then it is because we (as a society) have chosen and allowed this.

Violence

Unfreedom

Single mothers in ALSWH

Lives with own children, does not live with a partner, not married
994 observations (1.6%) from 539 women (3.2%) in full sample

Transitions in and out of single motherhood across surveys:

- 0.4–0.8% of women in the sample became single mothers from one year to the next
- 20–40% of single mothers started cohabiting with a partner from one year to the next



Past-year IPV

Group	No IPV	IPV - no/low coercive control	IPV - moderate coercive control	IPV - high coercive control
Single mothers	62.8%	15.5%	12.8%	8.9%
Partnered mothers	82.6%	11.1%	4.5%	1.9%
Single women without children	86.8%	8.2%	3.6%	1.5%
Partnered women without children	87.5%	8.8%	3.0%	0.7%



Unfreedom (MDP)

Group	No MDP	Marginal MDP	Deep MDP	Very Deep MDP
Single mothers	24.1%	34.0%	27.0%	14.9%
Partnered mothers	46.1%	32.1%	16.7%	5.2%
Single women without children	67.3%	23.7%	6.8%	2.2%
Partnered women without children	72.3%	20.5%	5.3%	1.9%



Does single motherhood predict unfreedom over and above past-year IPV?

- Fixed-effects multinomial logistic regression
- Controlling for past-year IPV, age and geographic location
- Single motherhood significantly increases a woman's risk of being in marginal, deep or very deep poverty

Model Results (RRRs)

Reference = No MDP	Marginal MDP	Deep MDP	Very Deep MDP
Single mothers	2.89 ^{***}	6.10 ^{***}	8.63 ^{***}
Partnered mothers	2.11 ^{***}	2.90 ^{***}	2.66 ^{***}
Single & childless	1.27 ^{***}	1.40 ^{***}	1.52 ^{**}
Partnered & childless	<i>Reference group</i>		

Conclusions

Amartya Sen:

- Human freedom is quintessentially a social product
- The equitable distribution of freedom among individuals and groups is the standard against which all social arrangements should be evaluated

Single mothers are at an increased risk of getting caught in the “gender trap”—not only due to the violence of individual men, but also as a result of the choices we as a society make

Life Course Centre
RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

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Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families:
Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis



KEYNOTE

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Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families:
Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis



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Director, Life Course Centre

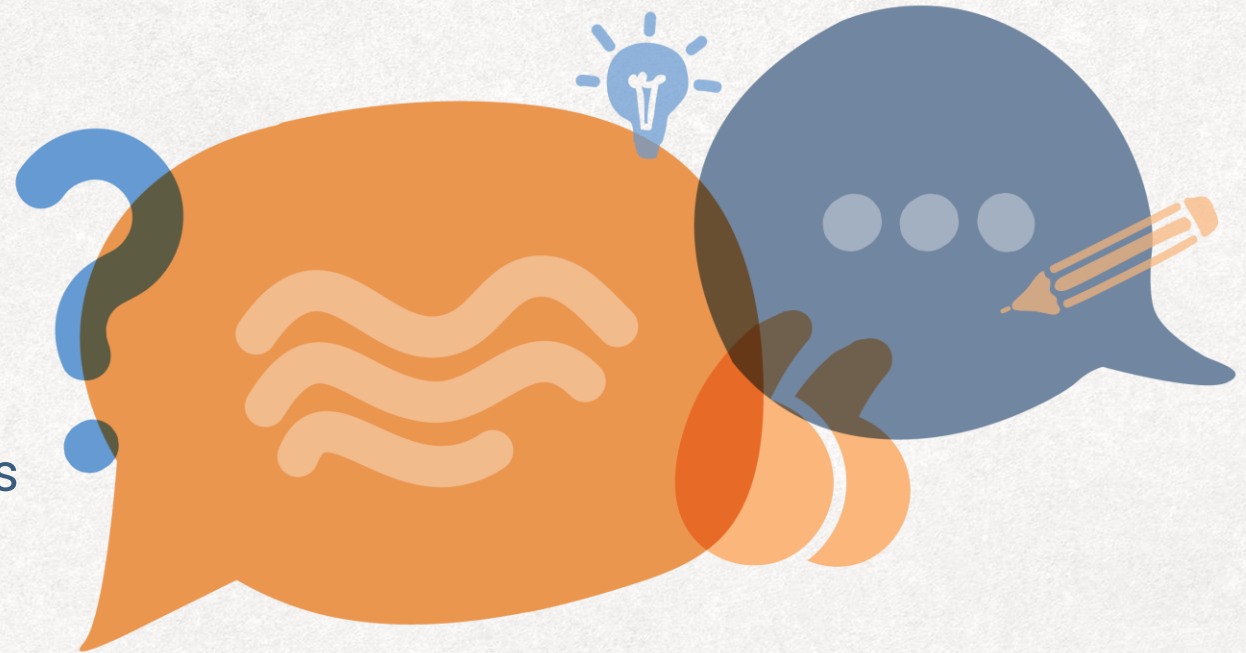
Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families:
Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis



FULL GROUP DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION SETTING

Time to reflect...

- What do we know?
- What do we need to know?
- What do we want policy-makers and influencers to know?
- What do we need to do next?



Facilitated by Alice Campbell (UQ), Dorinda 't Hart (UWA) and Jade Miller (visual scribe)

Thank you



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