



**Title:** Lone Parent Status Among Ethnic Groups in Canada: Census Data Explorations on its Prevalence, Composition and Generational Persistence Aspects

**Authors:** Fernando Mata, Hispanic Development Council

**Contact:** fernando.mata@pch.gc.ca

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**Research Question:**

The 2006 Canadian census data allowed the exploration of important research questions. For instance, which ethnic groups in Canada have the highest lone-parenthood rates? Which groups have the lowest? Do common-law status family choices usually accompany lone-parenthood choices? What demographic differences may be noticeable by the birthplace, visible minority status or ethnicity of family members? Are there, perhaps, observable signs of cycles of lone parenthood whereby lone parent status in one generation is reproduced in the next one?

**Importance:**

Research in the area of lone parenthood and ethnicity in Canada has both social inclusion and significant human rights relevance.

**Research Findings:**

Using custom tabulations from the 2006 Census, the analysis focused on the prevalence, composition, and generational persistence of the lone parenthood phenomenon among selected ethnic groups in Canada. The census data suggests that, among the 16.3 million adult census family members living in census families, visible minority rates of reporting were higher both among its foreign-born and Canadian-born members compared to the non-visible minority population. There were noticeable over-representations of individuals reporting lone-parent family status among Aboriginal groups and visible minorities, particularly those of Black and/or Latin American backgrounds. In terms of ethnic origins, lone parenthood was prevalent among Individuals reporting Somali (38%), Jamaican (29%), Haitian (27%), Trinidadian-Tobagonian (20%), and North American Indian (16%) ethnic ancestries. Lone parenthood was most rare among Chinese and South Asian (below 5%) as well as most European groups, excluding the Spanish group (12%). In terms of generational persistence of lone parenthood, the data suggests that both common-law unions and lone-parenthood family arrangements increased with a longer immigration history in Canada for most birthplace, visible minority, and ethnic origin groups examined. High lone-parenthood prevalence in combination with lower socioeconomic status weakens family resources and increases economic and social vulnerability of many ethnic minority families, affecting the life chances of parents (mostly women) and their children in successive generations.

**Implications:**

The social policy focus on single parents as a monolithic group should be changed and replaced with a more dynamic analysis across the life cycle of ethnic families, particularly those of Aboriginal and visible minority backgrounds. This entails developing more integrated strategies that could better assist vulnerable populations. Generic forms of assistance that take forms of income support could be complemented with more ethno-specific programs of assistance to immigrant serving agencies and community organizations attempting to reach disadvantaged lone parents of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Lone mothers cope with unique challenges and make family decisions in different sociocultural milieus (e.g. with respect to decisions regarding teenage pregnancies, cohabitation, birth outside marriage, re-partnering and step parenthood). The demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds of these women also have to be taken into account, as many tend to be younger and less university educated. Regardless of the ethnic background of parents, however, good policy interventions should have to occur in a climate of respect for the cultural backgrounds of lone parents, the right they have to control their lives and remain fully independent.