


Lone parents in Scotland, Great Britain and the UK: health, employment and social security.

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Key messages

- Lone parents are less likely than parents in couple families to report they have good general health and more likely to report that they have poor mental health.
- Employment and income are key social determinants of health and health inequalities. Lone parents are less likely to be financially secure or be in employment compared to parents in couple families.
- Rates of in-work poverty for lone parents are high, and they are also more likely to be working part time (despite wanting a full-time job) or in temporary employment.
- Lone parents out of work are more likely to be sanctioned compared with a decade ago, and the financial consequences of being sanctioned are more severe.
- Despite rising employment rates and falling levels of out-of-work benefit claims for lone parents, the health of lone parents has remained largely unchanged and the risk of financial insecurity and poverty for them and their children remains high.
- Increased conditionality in the social security system and ongoing labour market disadvantage remain plausible candidates to account for this.

Summary

Lone parents: facts

- Only a very small fraction of lone parents are teenagers: the average age of lone parents is 38 years.
- Employment rates for lone parents with secondary age children are high (70%), and the majority of lone parents who aren't currently working want to get a job or move into education or training.
- Poverty rates for children in lone parent households are much higher than those for children in couple families (41% vs. 24%).
- Childcare and job quality are important barriers to lone parents finding and keeping work, increasing their hours and progressing in work.

Lone parents in Scotland: an overview

- There were 141,400 lone parents with dependent children living in Scotland in 2015. More than nine out of 10 lone parents (91%) were female.
- Lone parents tend to be more disadvantaged than adults in couple households on a range of health and economic measures.

Benefits and employment

- Employment rates for lone parents in the UK and Scotland have increased over time. In Scotland, 62% of lone parents were in paid employment in 2015, compared with 43% in 1998.
- The number of lone parents claiming Income Support or Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) (the main out-of-work benefits for this group) has declined steadily over time. In Scotland, the numbers claiming Income Support/JSA fell from 93,000 in 1995 to 41,000 in 2015.
- There is some evidence that the number of lone parents neither claiming Income Support/JSA nor in paid work has increased in Britain in the last decade. This may be explained partly by an increase in the number of lone parents claiming sickness benefits or carers' allowance.

Health and financial security

- In 2012/13/14, around one-quarter of lone parents in Scotland described their general health as fair/bad/very bad, with 22% having a score of 4+ on the General Health Questionnaire 12 (GHQ-12) (and thus a possible mental health problem). Neither measure of health has improved compared with 2003.
- In 2014, although more than 60% of lone parents in Scotland were in employment, just one-quarter reported they thought their household was managing well financially. The gap between the lone parent employment rate and this measure of subjective financial security has, if anything, widened slightly over time.
- In the UK between 2010 and 2014, the percentage of children of lone parents living in workless households decreased by 7% but their risk of relative and absolute poverty fluctuated without a clear trend.

Labour market conditions

- The risk of relative poverty for children of lone parents working part time was 35% in 2014/15, similar to that seen for 2006/7. The risk of relative poverty for children of lone parents working full time was 19% in 2014/15, up from 12% in 2003/4.
- Lone parents are more likely than adults in couple families to be working in temporary employment because they cannot find a permanent position and in part-time work because they cannot find a full-time job. Compared with 2007, lone parents in employment in 2015 were more likely to be working part time or in a temporary job not through choice.

Conditionality and benefit sanctions

- In absolute and relative terms, lone parents are more likely to be sanctioned than they were 10 years ago, and the financial penalties associated with being sanctioned are more severe.
- Lone parents claiming Income Support can be sanctioned for failing to attend a work-focused interview or failing to undertake work-related activity. Based on 2008 research, the main explanations for failing to attend a work-focused interview were the ill health of a child, forgetting to attend the interview, not receiving the letter and clashing with another appointment.
- Lone parents claiming JSA are most likely to be sanctioned for failing to attend interviews, 'not actively seeking employment' and failing to participate in mandatory training, such as the Work Programme.

Lone parents and Universal Credit: the new requirements

- Universal Credit will increase conditionality on lone parents, in and out of employment.
- If the new rules were introduced in 2015, they would have increased conditionality for 11,000 lone parents out of work, including:
 - 6,220 lone parents whose child is aged 3–4 years, subject to all work-related requirements.
 - 1,700 lone parents whose child is aged 1 year, subject to work-focused interview requirements.
- The new rules will also require claimants in and out of work to increase their hours, get better paid work or take 'reasonable steps' that will allow them to do so, in the context of the labour market conditions outlined above.

Conclusions

- Compared with the mid to late 1990s, lone parents are less likely to be claiming out-of-work benefits and more likely to be in employment.

- Increased employment has not translated into improvements in their health and the financial circumstances of their families.
- Labour market conditions and increased conditionality in the social security system may partly account for this.
- Universal Credit is likely to increase conditionality for lone parents.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Richard Parker (Office for National Statistics) for guidance on how to derive lone parent data from the Labour Force Survey.

Introduction

This briefing was written to inform the work of the Lone Parents and Welfare Reform sub-group of the Scottish Government's Welfare Reform and Health Impact Delivery Group (HIDG). It provides:

- facts on lone parenthood
- estimates of the number of lone parents in Scotland and their comparative health
- trends in the number of lone parents in employment and claiming benefits
- trends in the health of lone parents and their financial circumstances
- labour market conditions for lone parents
- conditionality and benefit sanctions
- information about the new requirements for lone parents and Universal Credit.

For more information about the Lone Parents and Welfare Reform sub-group, please contact Kerry McKenzie: kerry.mckenzie@nhs.net. For more information about this briefing, please contact Martin Taulbut: martintaulbut@nhs.net.

Methods

Information on the characteristics of lone parents and their children in Scotland, Great Britain and the UK presented here is taken from a range of cross-sectional surveys and administrative data. The Quarterly Labour Force Survey¹ (household data sets), Scottish Household Survey² and Family Resources Survey (which the Households Below Average Income data³ is derived from) allow information to be presented directly on lone parent households.

The Scottish Health Survey⁴ does not directly identify lone parent households. As a second-best solution, the health data shown here refers to adults living in households with at least one child present, split by whether the adult is single/separated/divorced/widowed ('lone parent') or married/civil partnership/living as married ('couple').

Lone parents in the UK: facts

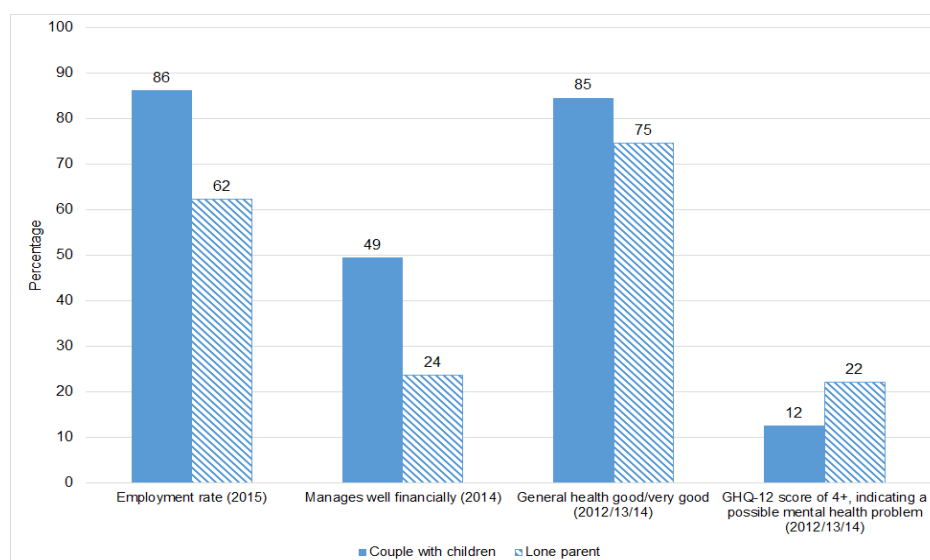
- In the UK, less than 2% of single parents are teenagers aged 16–19 years. (Labour Force Survey, April–June 2015).
- The average age of a single parent in the UK is around 38 years. On average, single mothers tend to be younger than single fathers (38 years old compared with 45 years old, respectively) (Labour Force Survey, April–June 2015).
- A total of 41% of children in single parent families in the UK live in relative poverty, around twice the risk of relative poverty faced by children in couple families (24%).⁵
- Single parents who aren't working overwhelmingly want to do so – 84% of non-working single mothers would like to get a paid job, become self-employed or train.⁶
- In the UK, the single parent employment rate rises to over 70% for those whose youngest child is 12–15 years old.²
- The lack of jobs that offer flexible working can mean single parents get stuck in part-time work, which is often low-paid, to balance work and family life.⁷
- Almost one in three (31%) single mothers would work more hours if they had good-quality and accessible childcare.⁸
- Single parents are disproportionately lower qualified than other groups (UK data).
 - 32% of single parents only have GCSE or equivalent level qualifications, compared with 23% of couple parents and 17 per cent of people without dependent children.
 - Only 11% of single parents have a degree-level qualification or higher, compared with 23% of couple parents and 20% of people with no dependent children.⁹

Lone parents in Scotland: an overview

There were an estimated 141,400 lone parents with dependent children living in Scotland in 2015. Nine out of 10 lone parents (91%, 128,400) were female.* Using National Records of Scotland data,¹⁰ the percentage of families with children in Scotland headed by a lone parent increased from 6.4% in 1981 to 24.5% in 2014. The change was greatest in the 1980s and to a lesser extent the 1990s, with much more modest growth since 2001.†

As *Figure 1* demonstrates, lone parents tend to be more disadvantaged than parents in couple households. They have lower employment rates, are less likely to report they are managing very well/fairly well financially,‡ are less likely to report they are in good/very good general health and more likely to score 4+ on the General Health Questionnaire 12 (GHQ-12), which indicates a possible mental health problem.

Figure 1: Lone parents compared to adults in couple households, selected social and economic indicators: Scotland.



Sources: Scottish Household Survey; Scottish Health Survey; Quarterly Labour Force Survey Household Data.

* Quarterly Labour Force Survey Household Data April–June 2015. National Records for Scotland estimate that there were 146,000 single adult with children households in Scotland in 2014.

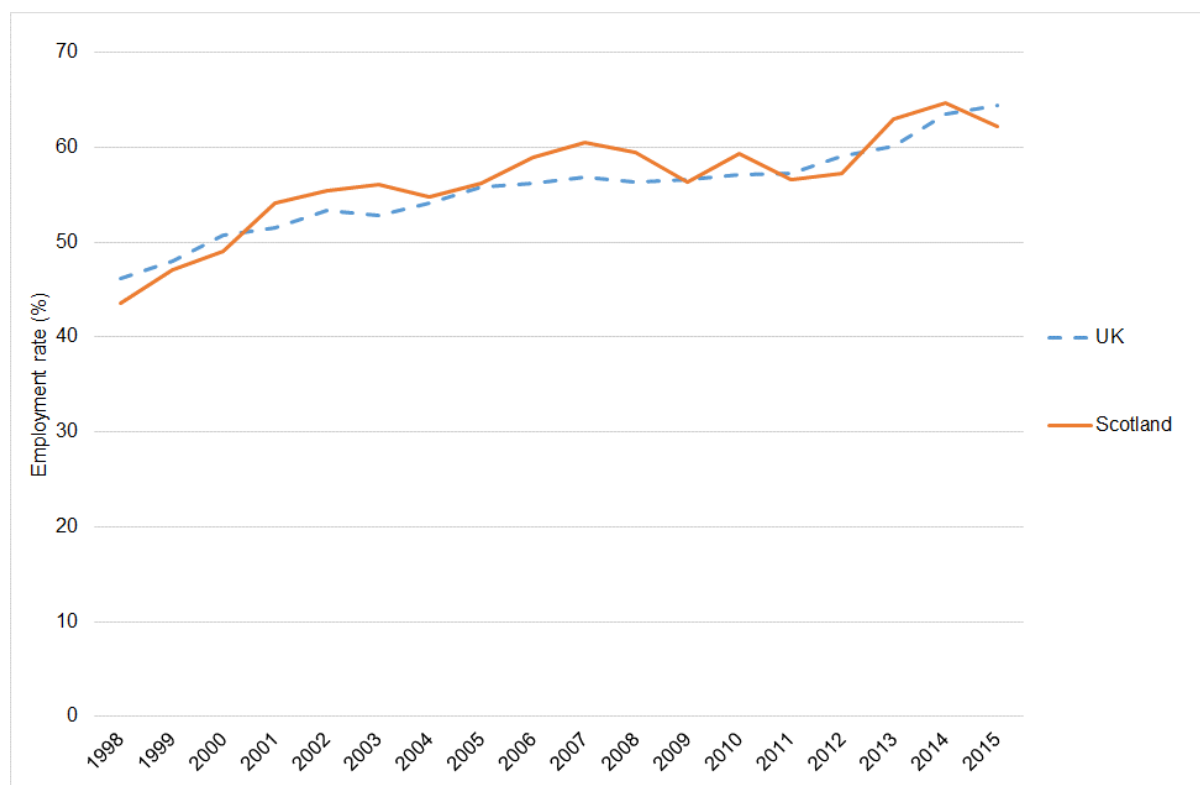
† Table 5 in National Records of Scotland, Estimates of Households and Dwellings in Scotland, 2015. NHS Health Scotland calculations.

‡ Financial management figure for couples refers to small family households (containing two adults and one/two children). For large families (containing two adults of any age and three or more children), the figure was 44% in 2014.

Benefits and employment

Lone parent employment rates have increased over time, both in Scotland and the UK. In 1998, 43% of lone parents in Scotland and 46% in the UK were in paid employment. By 2015, this had increased to 62% and 64%, respectively (*Figure 2*). In 2015, this meant an estimated 88,000 lone parents were in paid employment in Scotland.

Figure 2: Percentage of lone parents in employment, UK and Scotland: 1998–2015.

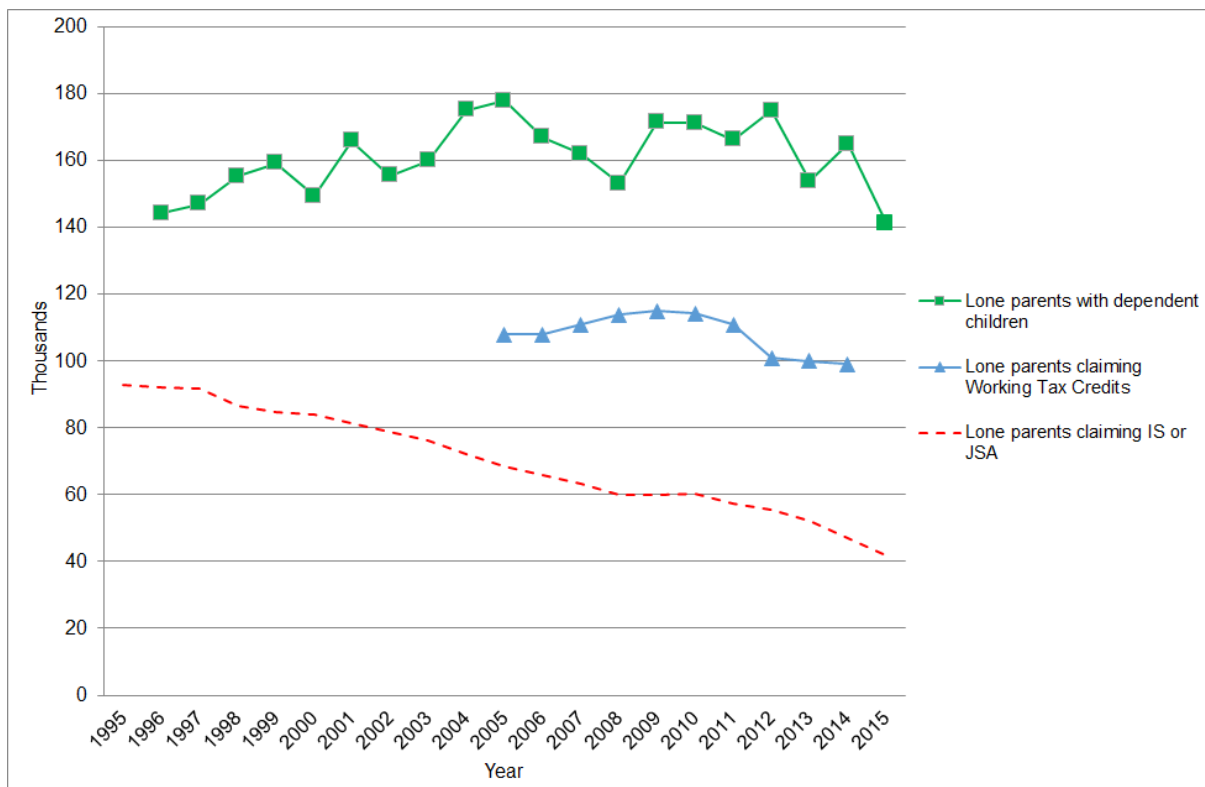


Sources: Quarterly Labour Force Survey Household Data.

Although the number of lone parents in Scotland increased between 1996 and 2005 before fluctuating without a clear trend, the number claiming either Income Support or JSA has declined steadily, falling from 93,000 in 1995 to 41,700 in 2015 (*Figure 3*).[§] *Figure 3* also shows that lone parents are much more likely to be dependent on in-work benefits than out-of-work benefits. In 2014 (the last year for which HMRC data are available), there were almost twice as many lone parents in Scotland claiming working tax credits as claiming Income Support/JSA.

[§] From 2008, lone parents whose youngest child was aged 12 years old were no longer entitled to claim Income Support and had to claim JSA instead. The age threshold with regard to the youngest children reduced incrementally in subsequent years, to reach 5 years or above from May 2012. This meant that the number of lone parents in Scotland claiming Income Support decreased from more than 92,000 to 35,000 between 1995 and 2015, while the number claiming JSA, which was negligible before 2008, stood at 6,725 in May 2015.

Figure 3: Number of lone parents with dependent children and number of lone parents claiming Income Support/JSA or Working Tax Credits: Scotland, 1995–2015.

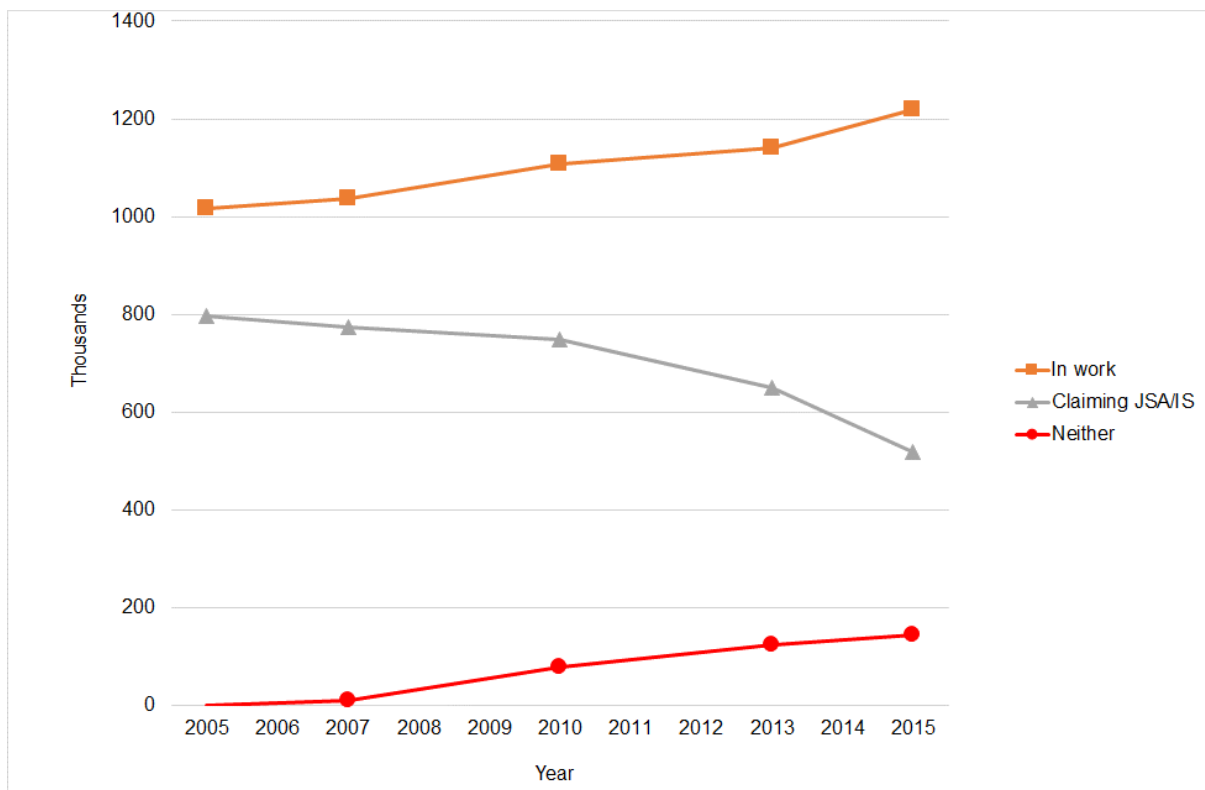


Sources: Department for Work and Pension (DWP) 5% and 100% sample data; HMRC Geographical analysis; Quarterly Labour Force Survey Household Data. IS, Income Support.

Since 2005, the estimated number of lone parents who were neither counted in claims for Income Support/JSA nor in the estimated number of lone parents in employment has increased (*Figure 4*). Possible explanations for this include:

- Artefact – the employment and population figures come from a survey which is subject to sampling error; the benefits data come from administrative sources, so matching them together is, at best, imprecise. (There is also likely to be some overlap, as some lone parents in employment were also eligible to claim Income Support.)
- More lone parents not in employment moved off Income Support/JSA onto other benefits, for example Employment Support Allowance.
- More lone parents stopped claiming Income Support/JSA but did not move into work, and were instead supported financially by family, friends and other means.

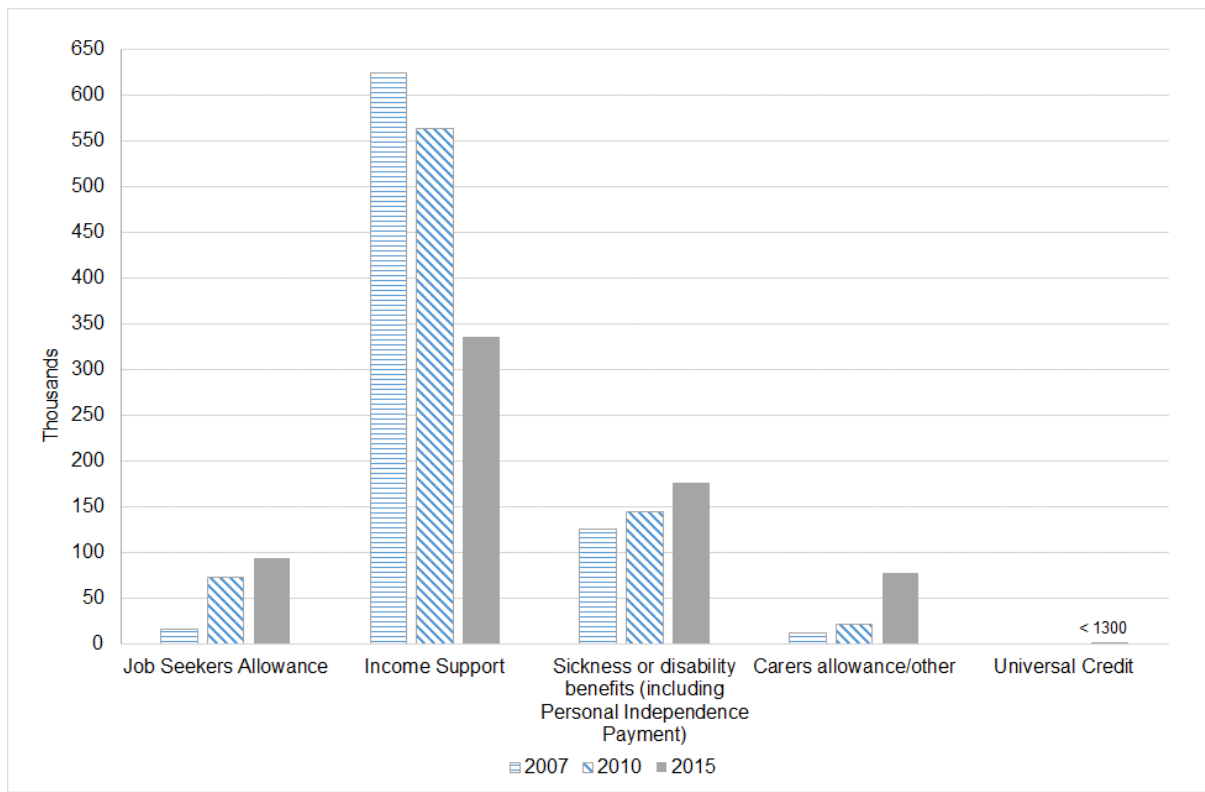
Figure 4: Lone parents in work, claiming Income Support/JSA and in neither category: Great Britain, 2005–2015.



Sources: Quarterly Labour Force Survey Household data set, April-June; DWP 100% sample data, May. IS, Income Support. Note: results are shown for Great Britain as estimates of the number of lone parents in employment are likely to be more robust than for Scotland.

Aspects of all three explanations could be possible. There is some evidence that the number of lone parents not in employment and claiming benefits other than Income Support/JSA, especially sickness benefits and carers allowance, has increased over time (*Figure 5*).

Figure 5: Lone parents not in employment by selected benefits claimed: Great Britain, 2007, 2010 and 2015.



Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey Household Dataset, April–June. Years selected to reflect situation pre, mid and post recession.

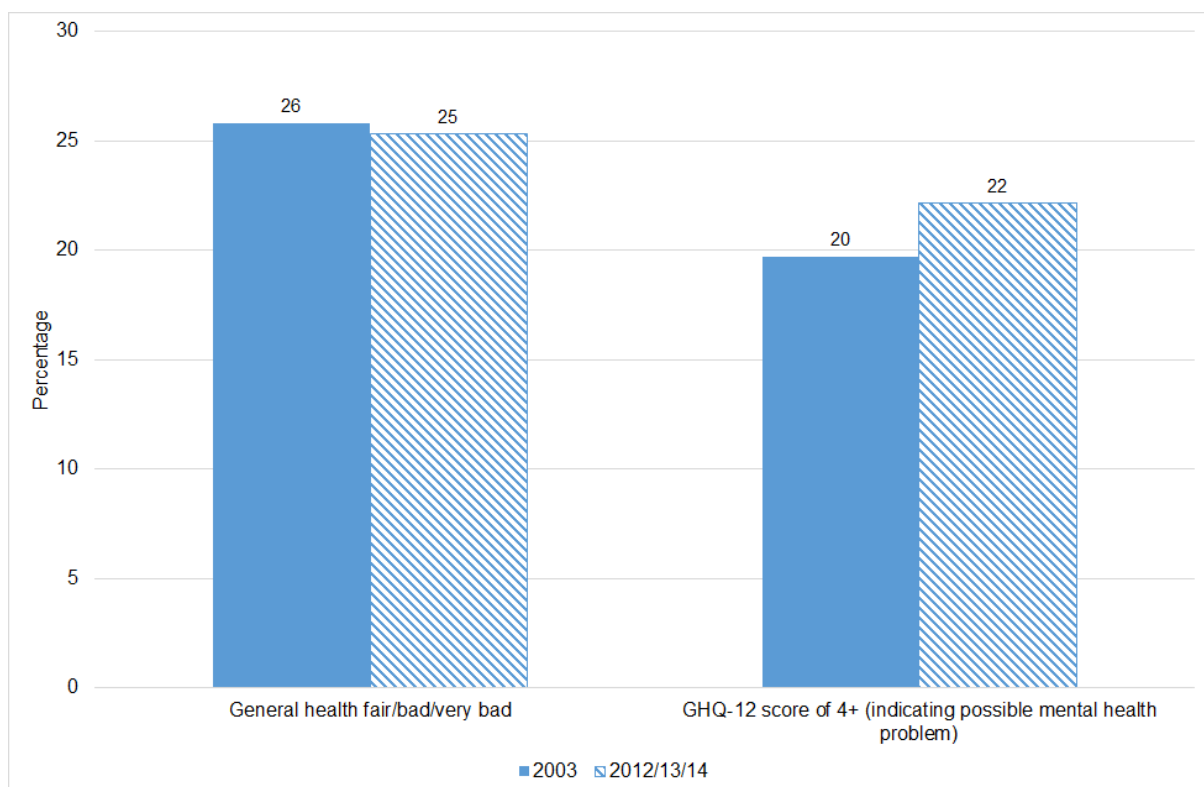
Change in the health of lone parents and the financial circumstances of their families

Increasing labour market participation has not caused sustained improvements in lone parents' health or the financial circumstances of their families. This can be illustrated in several ways.

Health

Figure 6 shows two measures of negative self-reported health – the percentage of adults reporting their health is fair/bad/very bad and the percentage with a GHQ-12 score of 4+, indicating a possible mental health problem. These data are for lone parents in Scotland in 2003 and 2012/13/14 (pooled data). Neither measure has improved over the period.

Figure 6: Percentage of lone parents reporting their general health is fair/bad/very bad and with a GHQ-12 score of 4+: Scotland, 2003 and 2012/13/14.



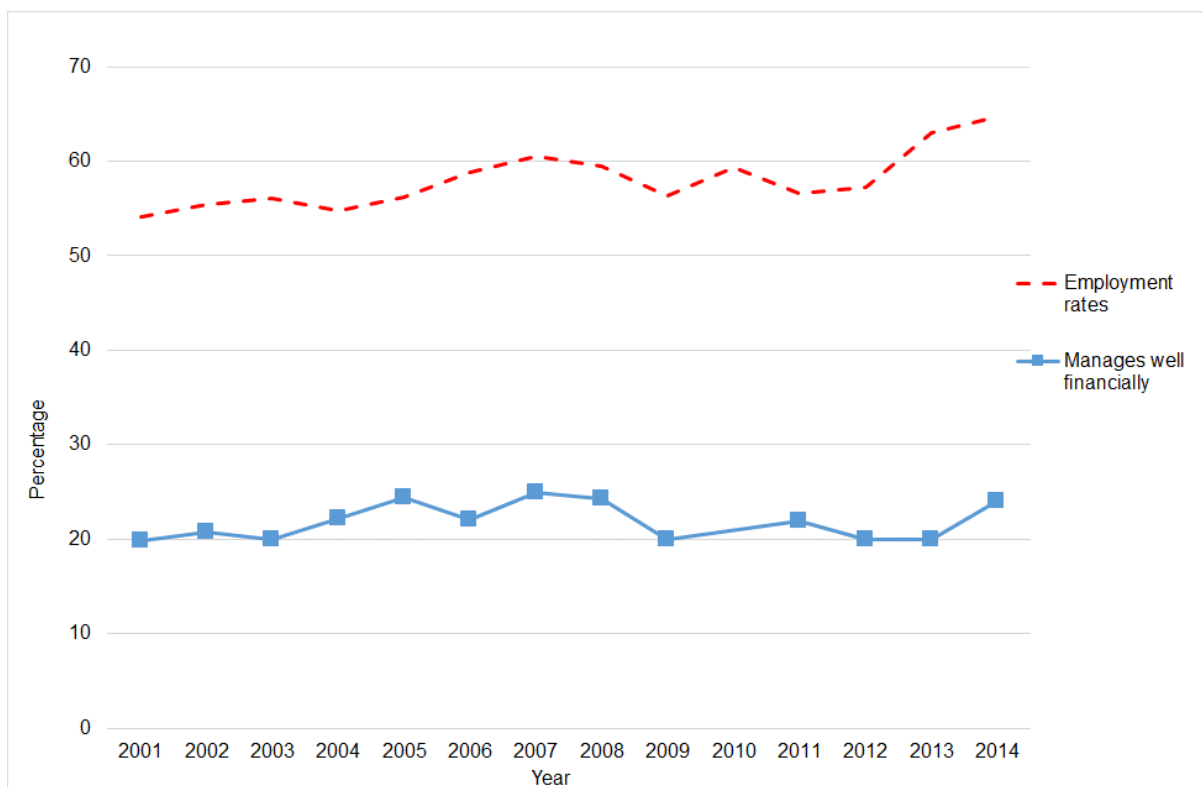
Source: Scottish Health Survey.

This seems counterintuitive given the association between paid employment and health, especially mental health, and the increase in employment rates observed for lone parents.

Financial circumstances

It is also possible to compare employment rates for lone parents in Scotland against perceptions of how the household is managing financially (*Figure 7*). While almost two-thirds of lone parents in Scotland were in paid employment in 2014, only one-quarter thought their household was managing well financially. Over time, the gap between the two measures has slightly increased: rising employment rates have not been matched by increases in perceived financial security.

Figure 7: Percentage of lone parents in employment and percentage who report that their household manages very/quite well financially: Scotland, 2001–2014.



Sources: Labour Force Survey; Scottish Household Survey.

Table 1 shows the percentage of children living in lone parent households where no one works against measures of relative and absolute** poverty for children living in lone parent households in the UK. Between 2010 and 2014, children in lone parent households were less likely to be living in a workless household, but their risk of relative poverty and absolute poverty fluctuated without a clear trend.

Table 1: Percentage of children in lone parent households where no one is working, and risk of relative and absolute poverty for children living in all lone parent households: UK, 2010–2014.

Circumstances	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Living in workless households	48%	48%	46%	43%	41%
Living in relative poverty, after housing costs	41%	42%	42%	41%	44%
Living in absolute poverty, after housing costs	41%	46%	47%	45%	42%

Source: Labour Force Survey; DWP Households Below Average Income (HBAI) data.

** The relative poverty measure is the proportion of children living in households below 60% of contemporary median income, while the absolute measure is the proportion living in households below 60% of 2010/11 median incomes.

Labour market conditions

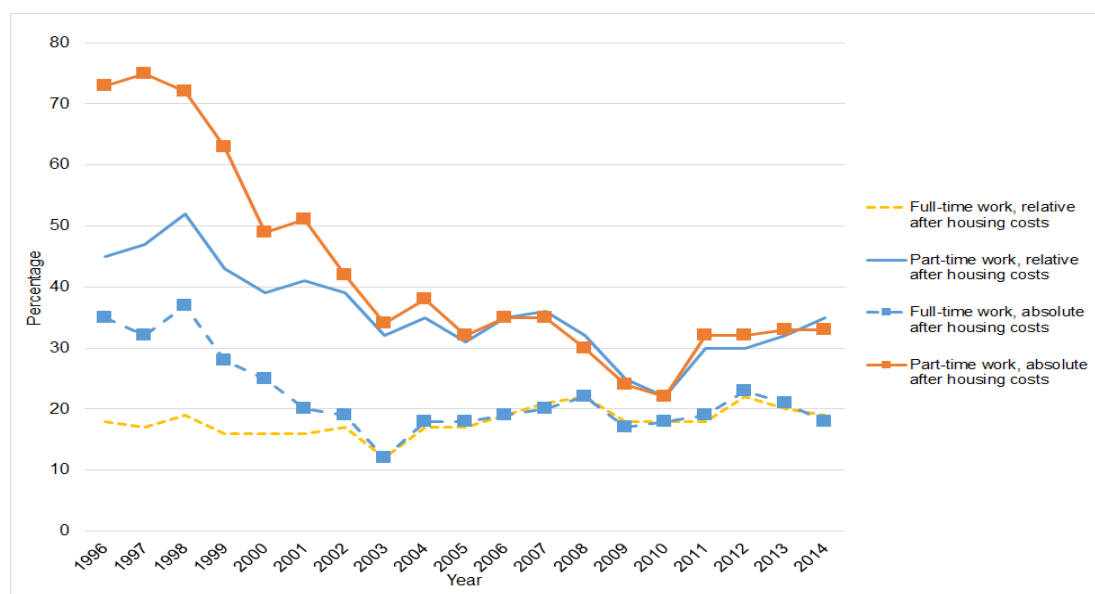
In-work poverty

Figure 8 shows the time trends for the risk of in-work poverty after housing costs for children in lone parent households in the UK.

This shows that:

- The risk of relative poverty for children of lone parents working part time was 35% in 2014/15, similar to that seen for 2006/07. The risk of poverty in absolute terms was 33%.
- The risk of poverty (both relative and absolute) for those whose parents worked part time declined between the late 1990s and mid 2000s. Since then, apart from a temporary fall during the period 2007–2010, risk of poverty for this group has remained largely unchanged.
- Risk of poverty for those whose parents worked full time was lower, but also fluctuated more over time. The risk of relative poverty for children of lone parents working full time was 19% in 2014/15, up from 12% in 2003/4. The absolute risk of poverty for this group was 18%.

Figure 8: Risk of poverty for children living in lone parent households, by parents' working status: UK, 1996–2014.

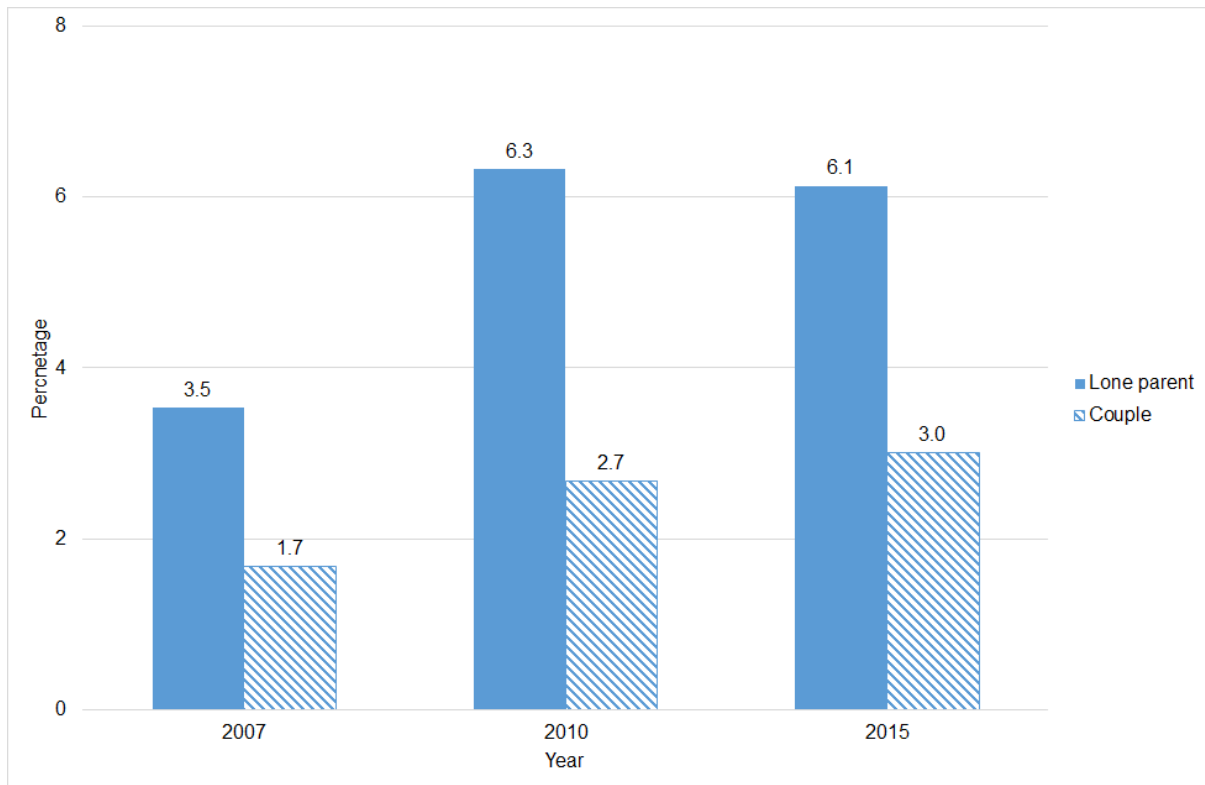


Source: DWP Households Below Average Income (HBAI) data.

Lack of full-time hours

Compared with adults in couple households, lone parents are more likely to be working a part-time job because they cannot find full-time work (6.1% vs. 3% in 2015). The percentage of parents working part time involuntarily has increased since 2007 (*Figure 9*).

Figure 9: Percentage of parents in employment working part time because they could not find full-time employment: UK, 2007, 2010 and 2015.

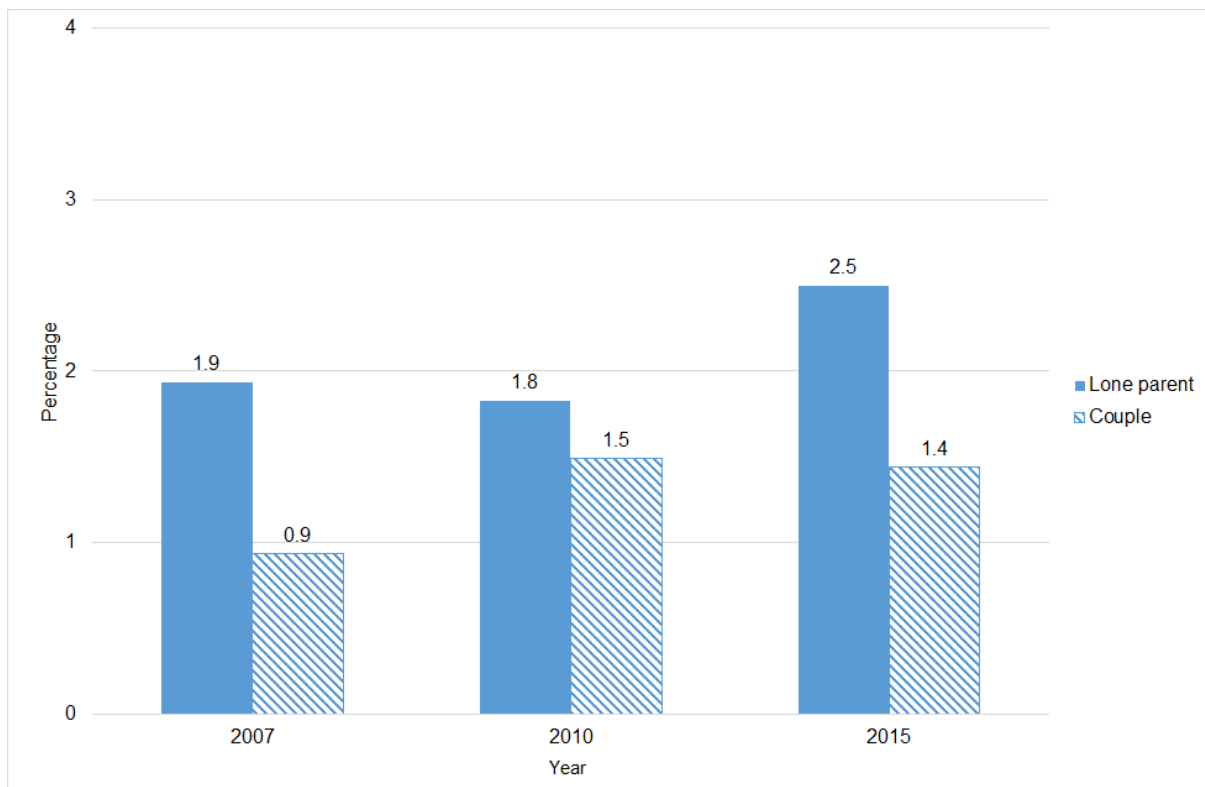


Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey Household dataset, April–June. Years selected to reflect situation pre, mid and post recession.

Insecurity at work

Lone parents in employment are more likely than adults in couple families to report they are working in a temporary job because they could not find a permanent position (2.5% vs 1.4%). The percentage of parents working in temporary jobs involuntarily has increased since 2007; however, while the increase occurred between 2007 and 2010 for couples, it occurred between 2010 and 2015 for lone parents (*Figure 10*).

Figure 10: Percentage of parents working in temporary work because they could not find a permanent position: UK, 2007, 2010 and 2015.



Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey Household dataset, April–June. Years selected to reflect situation pre, mid and post recession.

Conditionality and benefit sanctions

What is conditionality?

In the context of social security, conditionality is about linking benefit receipt, not just to meeting certain eligibility criteria (such as age, illness, caring responsibilities or being out of work), but to evidence that recipients are behaving in a 'responsible' way (e.g. actively looking for work or preparing to actively look for work at some future date).

What is a benefit sanction?

Benefit sanctions are economic penalties which can be applied to people claiming out-of-work benefits. Their stated aim is to change benefit claimants' behaviour and ensure compliance with the benefit rules. It is argued this will increase their engagement in labour market-related activity and increase their chances of finding work. Here we focus on sanctions associated with Income Support and JSA, as few lone parents were claiming Universal Credit at the time of writing. The financial penalties associated with being sanctioned differ between the two benefits:

- Income Support – The penalty is a reduction in the lone parent's benefit equivalent to 20% of the Income Support personal allowance rate for a single person aged 25 years or above.
- JSA – A new sanctions regime for JSA claimants, with increased penalties, was introduced in October 2012. Currently the lowest financial penalty from a sanction is four weeks loss of benefits for a first failure at the lowest level of offence,¹¹ while the maximum penalty is three years loss of benefit for a third offence at the highest level.¹²

Before a sanction is applied, a doubt is raised against a claimant and is referred to a decision-maker. If the decision-maker makes an adverse decision, the sanction is applied.

How many lone parents are affected?

Figure 11 shows the number of lone parents in Great Britain claiming Income Support or JSA who were sanctioned at least once within each financial year between 2004/5 and 2014/15, showing the split between Income Support and JSA sanctions.

Figure 12 shows the number of lone parents in Great Britain claiming either Income Support or JSA in May of each year, from 2004 to 2014. These data show that:

- The absolute number of lone parents in Great Britain claiming Income Support/JSA who were sanctioned increased from 31,000 in 2004/5 to 59,246 in 2014/15.
- As the number of lone parents claiming Income Support/JSA fell from more than 823,000 to 586,000, this means the relative risk of being sanctioned has also increased.
- In 2004/5, no lone parents claiming JSA were sanctioned in Great Britain. In 2014/15, JSA sanctions accounted for one-third of all lone parent sanctions (19,646). This is important given the more severe penalties associated with JSA sanctions relative to Income Support even before the October 2012 changes.

Figure 11: Number of lone parents claiming Income Support or JSA who were sanctioned at least once within each financial year: Great Britain, 2004/5 to 2014/15.

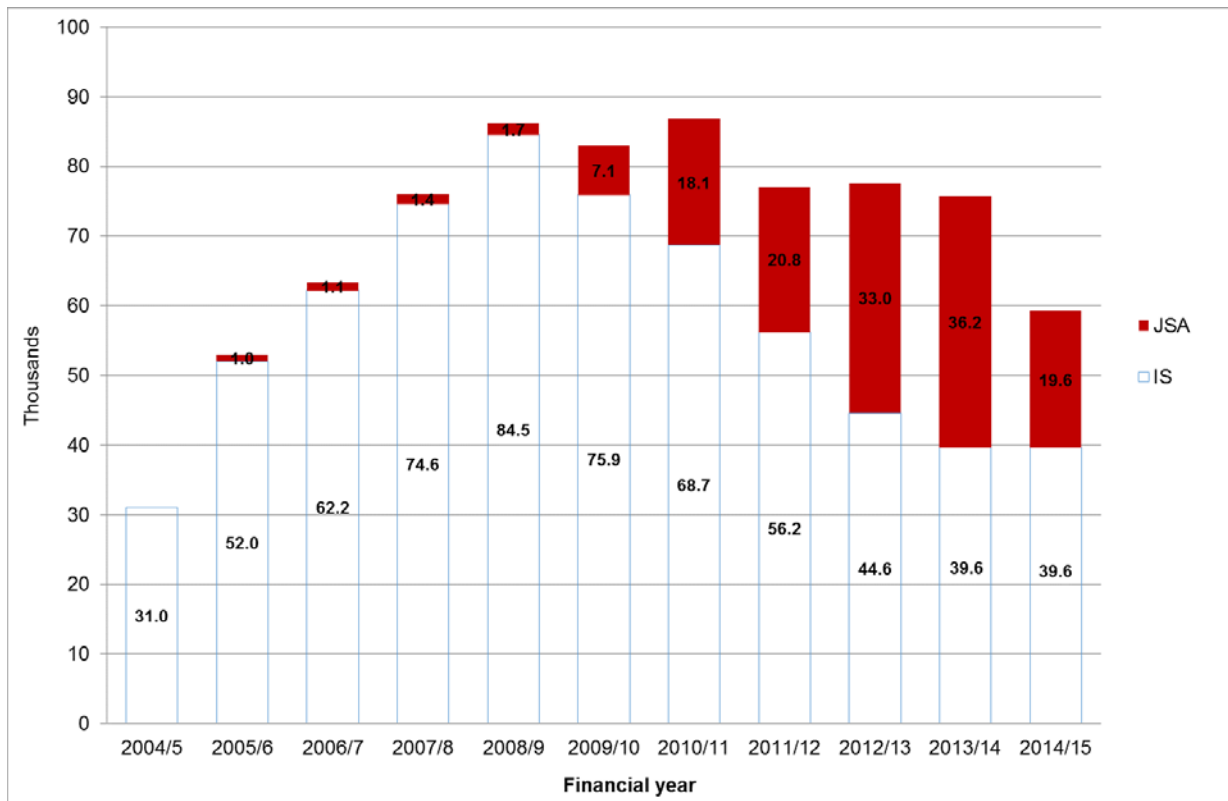
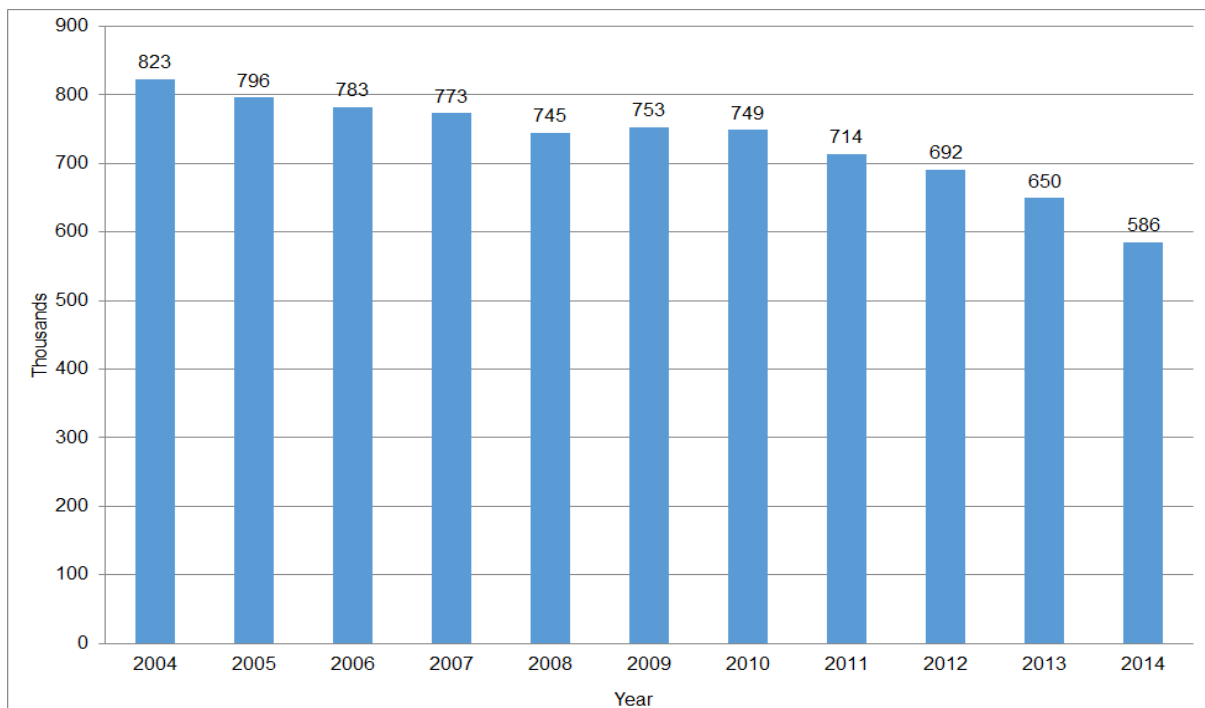


Figure 12: Number of lone parents claiming Income Support or JSA, May of each year: Great Britain, 2004–2014.



Source: DWP Income Support Lone Parents Regime:¹³ Official Statistics; DWP Stat X-plore;¹⁴ DWP Lone parents receiving JSA: monthly claimant count; DWP WPLS.

Why are lone parents sanctioned?

Lone parents claiming Income Support

Lone parents claiming Income Support are most likely to be sanctioned for failing to attend a work-focused interview or failing to undertake agreed work-related activity. From April 2014, lone parents on Income Support with a child aged 1–4 years were required to attend a work-focused interview at a frequency and duration determined by their personal adviser: a minimum of two work-focused interviews a year for those with children aged 1–3 years and a minimum of four a year for those aged 4 years.

Goodwin (2008)¹⁵ reported that the most common reasons for lone parents missing an interview were:

- ill health or ill health of child
- forgot to attend
- did not receive the letter
- clashed with another appointment.

Lone parents claiming JSA

Lone parents claiming JSA can be sanctioned for a much wider range of ‘offences’ than those on Income Support. However, in practice, most are sanctioned for failing to attend interviews, failing to participate in mandatory training programmes (such as the Work Programme) or for ‘not actively seeking employment’.

As shown in *Table 2*, before the introduction of the stricter regime (October 2012), the most common reasons for lone parents claiming JSA being sanctioned were:

- failure to attend or participate in an adviser interview without good reason
- not actively seeking employment
- failure to attend a ‘back to work’ session without good reason.

After October 2012, the most common reason for lone parents on JSA being sanctioned were:

- not actively seeking employment

- failure to participate in a scheme for assisting person to obtain employment without good reason (e.g. Work Programme)
- failure to attend or participate in an adviser interview without good reason.

It should be noted that the ‘not actively seeking employment’ category is not as clear cut as it suggests. Webster (2015)¹⁶ has argued that: ‘“Not actively seeking work” is a misnomer. It usually means that the claimant is actively seeking work but has not done exactly what they are told by Jobcentre Plus’.

Table 2: Main reasons for a sanction being applied to lone parents claiming JSA, old and new regime: Great Britain (decisions made to December 2015).

Reason for referral	Old – pre 22 October 2012	New – from 22 October 2012
Failure to attend or participate in an adviser interview without good reason	24,458	17,221
Not actively seeking employment	20,155	30,230
Failure to attend or participate in an adviser interview without good reason (pre April 2010)	6,376	–
Failure to attend ‘back to work session’ without good reason	5,004	–
Failure to participate in a scheme for assisting a person to obtain employment without good reason (Work Programme)	4,024	20,555
Left employment voluntarily without good reason	3,574	2,043
Refusal or failure to apply for, or accept if offered, a job which an employment officer has informed him/her is vacant or about to become vacant without good reason	3,330	1,325
Not being available for work	1,878	1,533

Reason for referral	Old – pre 22 October 2012	New – from 22 October 2012
Failure to attend a place on a training scheme or employment programme without good reason	1,408	34
Losing employment through misconduct	993	668
Refusal or failure to comply with a Jobseeker's Direction without good reason	863	2,414
Failure to participate in a scheme for assisting person to obtain employment without good reason (skills conditionality)	292	2,129
Failure to participate in a 'mandatory work activity' without good reason	261	812
Jobseeker's Agreement questions	175	–
Losing a place on a training scheme or employment programme through misconduct	88	–
Voluntarily leaving a place on a training scheme or employment programme without good reason	34	8
Other referral reason	28	90
Neglect to make use of a reasonable opportunity of a place on a training scheme or employment programme without good reason	22	–
Refusal of a place on a training scheme or employment programme without good reason	14	–
Failure to participate in a scheme for assisting person to obtain employment without good reason (work experience)	10	16
Failure to participate in a scheme for assisting person to obtain employment without good reason (other scheme)	9	622

Reason for referral	Old – pre 22 October 2012	New – from 22 October 2012
Trade disputes	7	–
Failure to participate in supervised job search	–	14
Fail to make use of a reasonable opportunity of employment without good reason	–	8

Source: DWP Stat X-plore.

Lone parents and Universal Credit: the new requirements

Table 3 shows the number of lone parents in Scotland (April–June 2015), by the age of their youngest child and employment status.

Table 3: Estimated number of lone parents in Scotland, by age of youngest child and employment status, April–June 2015: eligibility requirements for Universal Credit.

Age of youngest child	Not in employment	In employment	Requirements under Universal Credit 2015/16
≥ 5 years	34,539	63,161	Subject to all work-related requirements
4 years	1,236	1,120	Subject to all work-related requirements
3 years	5,022	3,880	Subject to all work-related requirements
2 years	3,885	3,216	Work-focused interview and work preparation requirement
1 year	1,702	2,616	Work-focused interview requirements
< 1 year	3,325	1,817	No work-related requirements

Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey Household Dataset, April–June 2015.

The table also shows the requirements for lone parents claiming Universal Credit, under the Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015/16. Although very few lone parents are currently claiming Universal Credit, based on the numbers for 2015 we can suggest this would mean increasing conditionality for 11,845 lone parents **out of work** in Scotland, as follows:

- 6,258 lone parents whose youngest child was aged 3–4 years subject to all work-related requirements
- 3,885 lone parents whose youngest child was aged 2 years with increased work preparation
- 1,702 lone parents whose youngest child was aged 1 year subject to work-focused interview requirements.

In addition, many lone parents **in work** may also be required to increase their hours, get better paid work, or take ‘reasonable steps’ which will allow them to do so, in order to retain their eligibility for Universal Credit. This should be considered in the context of labour market conditions outlined in the previous section.

Box 1 sets out in detail what is expected of responsible carers placed in each of the four Universal Credit categories.¹⁷

Box 1: What is expected of responsible carers under the Universal Credit system?

Under Universal Credit, claimants are placed in one of four 'conditionality groups', according to their circumstances. The four groups are:

- 1 No work-related requirements** – claimants in this group will not be expected to undertake any additional activities to receive Universal Credit.
- 2 Work-focused interview requirement** – claimants in this group will be expected to attend periodic interviews to discuss their plans for returning to the labour market or, if already in work, to begin thinking about taking on more work, or better paid work.
- 3 Work preparation requirement** – in addition to attending work-focused interviews, claimants in this group will be expected to take reasonable steps to prepare for work, do more work or get better paid work, such as attending a skills assessment, improving personal presentation or participating in the Work Programme.
- 4 All work-related requirements** – claimants in this group will need be available for, and actively seeking work, as people currently in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance are. If already in work, they may be expected to do more work, or seek better paid work. Claimants may be expected to spend a specific amount of time undertaking certain activities, e.g. carrying out work searches, making applications and registering with employment agencies.

Source: Kennedy S. Welfare Reform and Work Bill [Bill 51 of 2015-16]. London; House of Commons; 2015. Contains Parliamentary information licensed under the Open Parliament Licence v3.0.

Conclusions

Lone parent employment rates have risen, and their dependence on out-of-work benefits fallen in Scotland and Great Britain over the last decade. Despite this, their health has remained largely unchanged and the risk of financial insecurity and poverty for them and their children remains high. Increased conditionality in the social security system and ongoing labour market disadvantage remain plausible reasons for this. Universal Credit will increase conditionality on lone parents, both out of work and in employment, to retain benefit eligibility.

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