

Single mothers spend less time with their children than married mothers

24 November 2008

A new study in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* examined differences in the amount and type of time that single, cohabiting, and married mothers spend with their children. Cohabiting and married mothers spend similar amounts of time caring for their children. Results show that single mothers spend less time with their children than married mothers. However, if single mothers had the same level of education and employment as married mothers, they would spend the same amount of time with their children.

Single mothers spent around 83 to 90 percent as much time with their children as married mothers. Single mothers spend less time with children, on average because as a group they are less educated than married mothers - and more highly educated mothers spend more time with children. As a group, single mothers have higher employment rates - and employed mothers spend less time caring for their children than mothers who are not employed.

"This suggests that if we want to equalize maternal investments in time with children, we could do so by encouraging policies that focus on improving educational and employment opportunities for single mothers," the authors conclude.

Sarah Kendig and Suzanne Bianchi of the University of Maryland used data from the American Time Use Survey to study the relationship between family structure and maternal time with children among 4,309 married mothers and 1,821 single mothers with children less than 13 years of age.

Source: Wiley

APA citation: Single mothers spend less time with their children than married mothers (2008, November 24) retrieved 4 December 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-11-mothers-children.html>

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