

The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth, and Family Policies at
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Among the countries included in the table below, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States have the largest proportion of mothers who are not married. In Italy, 63 percent of lone mothers are widowed, followed by Portugal (30 percent) and Spain (27 percent). Divorced mothers are the highest proportions of lone mothers in Japan (68 percent), Israel (58 percent), and Spain (57 percent). One of the challenges in describing the prevalence of lone mother family types is that the definitions vary across countries. In the table below, “Single” refers to lone mothers who never married or cohabitated. In the United Kingdom, “Separated” includes those separated from marriage and co-habitation, while in the United States it refers to those who are separated from marriage.

Table 2.18 Percentage of different types of lone mother families: most recent data

	Single	Separated	Divorced	Widowed
Austria (1999)	26	8	34	32
Belgium (1997)	16	29	39	14
Finland (1999)	34	13	48	5
Germany (1999)	27	13	39	22
Ireland (1999)	63	29	2	6
Israel (1999)	10	12	58	18
Italy (1998)	7	..	31	63
Japan (1998)	7	4	68	19
Luxembourg (2000)	22	23	34	22
Netherlands (2001)	33	11	51	6
New Zealand (1996)	46	29	20	5
Portugal (1996)	13	19	31	30
Spain (1999)	12	4	57	27
UK (2001)	46	20	29	4
USA (2000)	43	18	35	4

Source: Bradshaw, J. & Finch, N. (2002). *A Comparison of Child Benefit Packages in 22 Countries*. Table 2.3. UK: Department for Work and Pensions.