

## **The unintended consequences of the evolving family unit**

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The traditional family unit comprised of the father who specializes in labour market work and the mother who specializes in home production is in decline in the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US) and many other developed economies across the globe. The reasons behind the decline of traditional labour division among married and cohabiting couples are multifaceted but reflect in large the increased participation of women in Higher Education, the increased share of women in employment, the narrowing gender pay gap and improvements to gender equality in the domain of economic decision-making. Women's labour market progress—coupled with stagnant wages, the decade long economic slowdown, issues surrounding the affordability of housing/accommodation and frequently economic necessity—has meant that the family unit has had a steady increase in the share of employed married mothers, who when employed, are often the primary breadwinners. For instance, in the UK, approximately 59% of married mothers with children under age 15 are in paid-employment, with approximately 50% being in full-time work (>30 hours per week) and with 33% earning more than their full-time employed husbands. Families who don't follow this trend, often stay behind economically. For instance, UK households that depend only on fathers' earnings have the same average income as 15 years ago, often resulting in a low living standard among children. However, there is a growing stream of research suggesting that the decline of the traditional division of labour in the household, by challenging gender identity norms (i.e. "a man should earn more than his wife"), remains unsettling for many in society. The core aim of the proposed research is to examine the consequences of this decline in the traditional family on a number of previously unidentified economic and social outcomes. Importantly, these outcomes are not constrained to mothers and fathers but also include, where applicable, the outcomes of children and young adults who have grown up, or are growing up, in these less traditional households. These objectives serve to help us understand the consequences of the transition to a less specialized division of labour within the household, and looking forward, how the next generation is being affected by growing up in these non-traditional families. The proposed research will be based on the secondary analysis of at least three existing sources of data: The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS); Understanding Society (USoc); and the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS).