



Families for Justice:
why & how the state should protect
families to promote fairness

Public
Policy
Unit

Working Draft

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Why & how the state should start with families to promote fairness

Why

- The state's existential crisis
- Care: the unjust distribution that effects all other distributions
- Relational care and families' infungibility

How

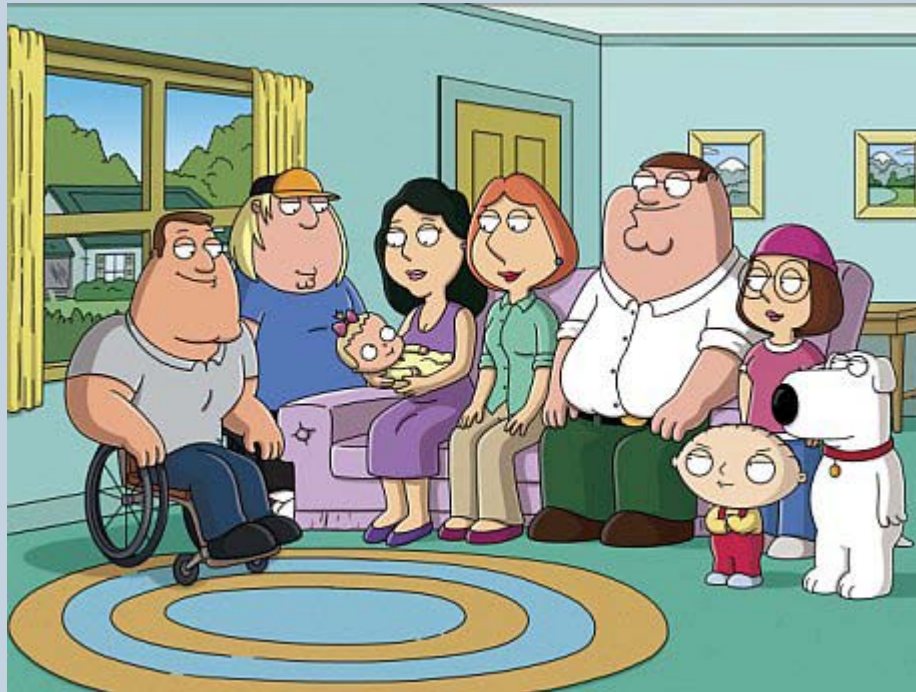
- Level-up; protect rather than undermine families
- A theory of 'family failure'
- Family-conscious work, welfare & public services

The state's existential crisis

- Three existential questions for the state (from a Rawlsian social justice, or capability perspective):
 1. Why, despite welfare, public service and labour market reform, does disadvantage & **poverty persist**?
(A decent minimum of primary goods)
 2. Why, despite meritocratic rules in education, workplace and public institutions, has **social mobility mostly failed to materialise**? (A fair distribution, and due desert)
 3. Why, despite apparently increasing freedoms, are some so **unhappy**? (Liberty over the good life)

The one-word answer:

Families



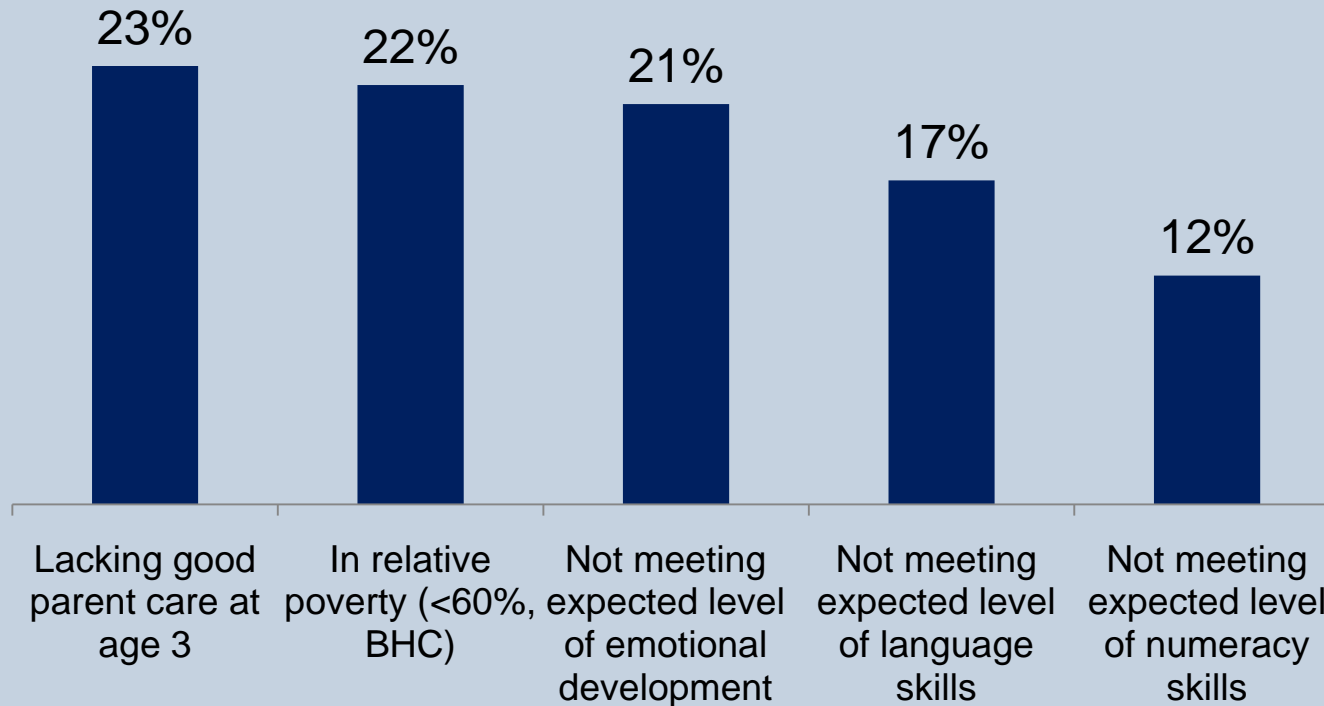
Families for social justice

- Left insight: injustice **between** families
- Feminist insight: injustice **within** families
- Liberal insight: injustice of **interference in** families
- The Families for Justice argument:
 - Injustice of **access to** good family life
 - This effects access to other goods/ capabilities (e.g. income)
 - Families (quality caring relationships) as a good to be fairly distributed (giving & receiving), and freely enjoyed
 - Families as **an end – and a means** – for progressive policy

A decent minimum (of care)?

- Disadvantage should include 'the loss of family life' (Bowlby), reflecting emotional as well as economic needs

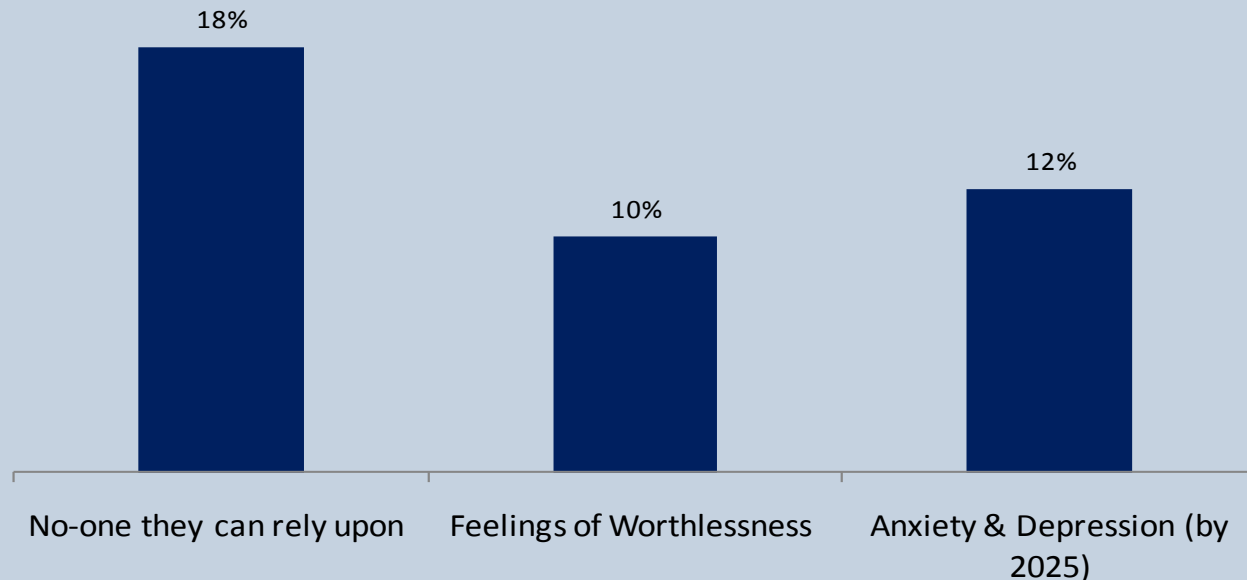
Proportion of children disadvantaged on key emotional and economic indicators



A decent minimum (of care)?

- Emotional needs do not end with childhood. Throughout life emotional indicators relate but are not coterminous with the economic

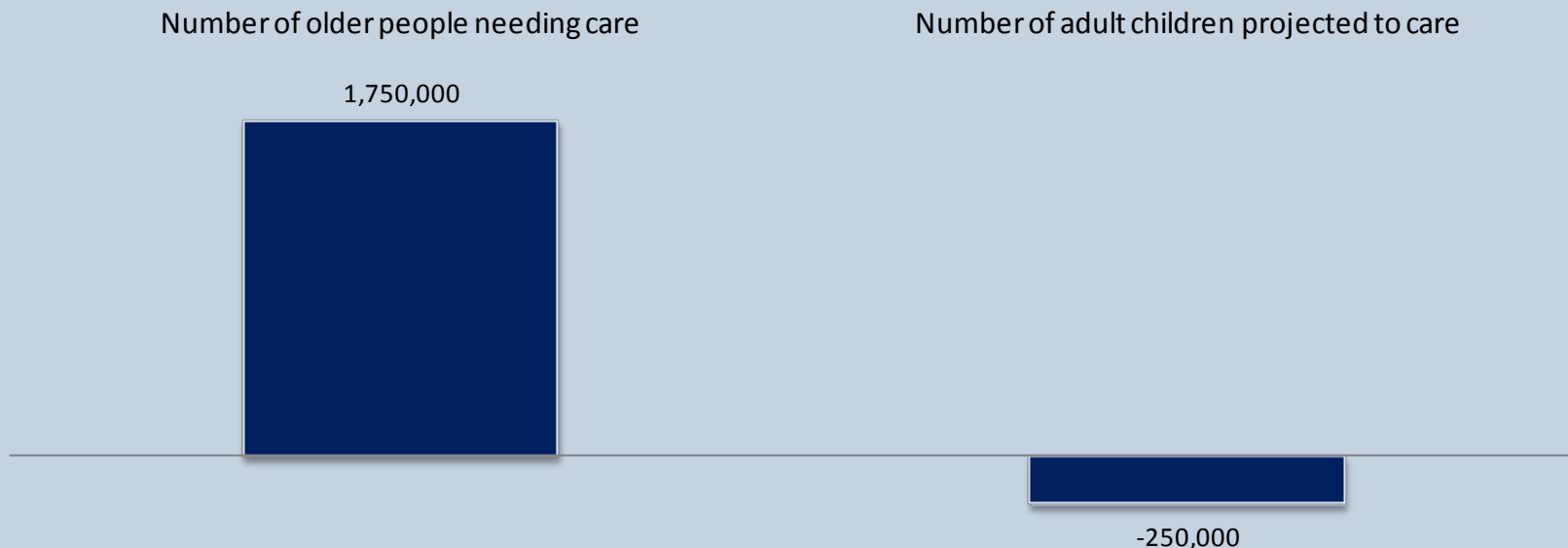
Proportion of adults suffering emotional distress



A decent minimum (of care)?

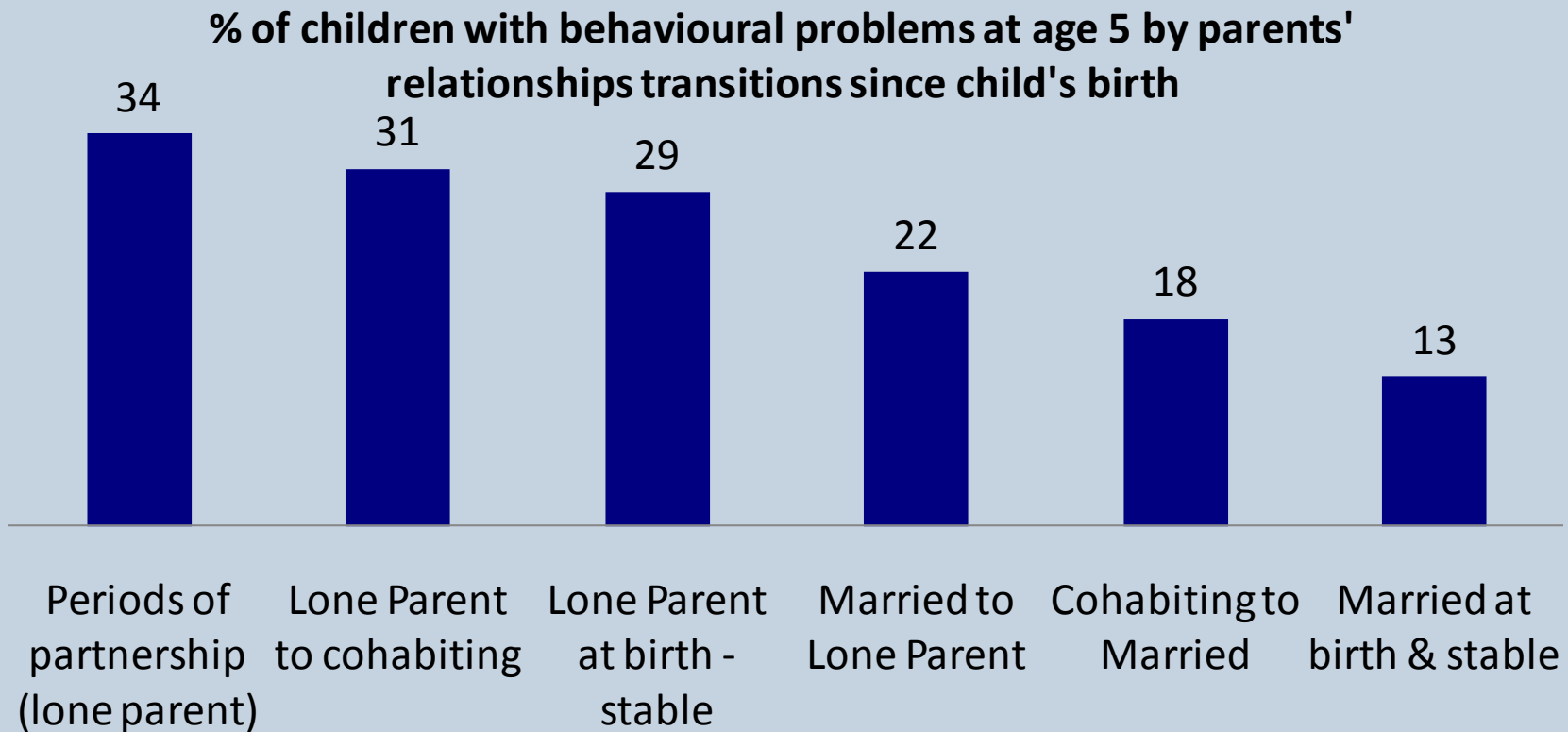
- Care needs are rising with ageing – while fewer people are able to meet them

Expected change in care need vs. availability of 'informal' care 2005-2041



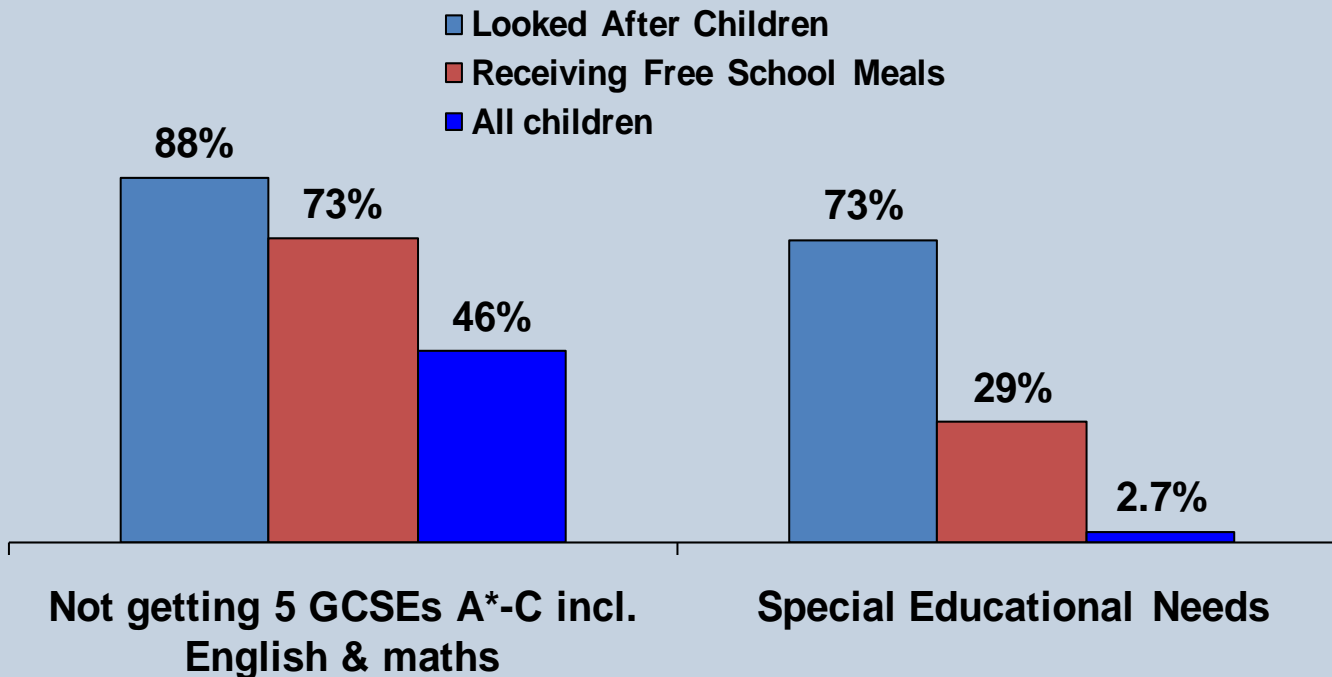
A decent minimum (of caring)?

- By age five, one in four children have experienced a negative transition in their parents' relationship



A fair distribution (of care)?

- Children in care are even more educationally disadvantaged than children from families on Free School Meals

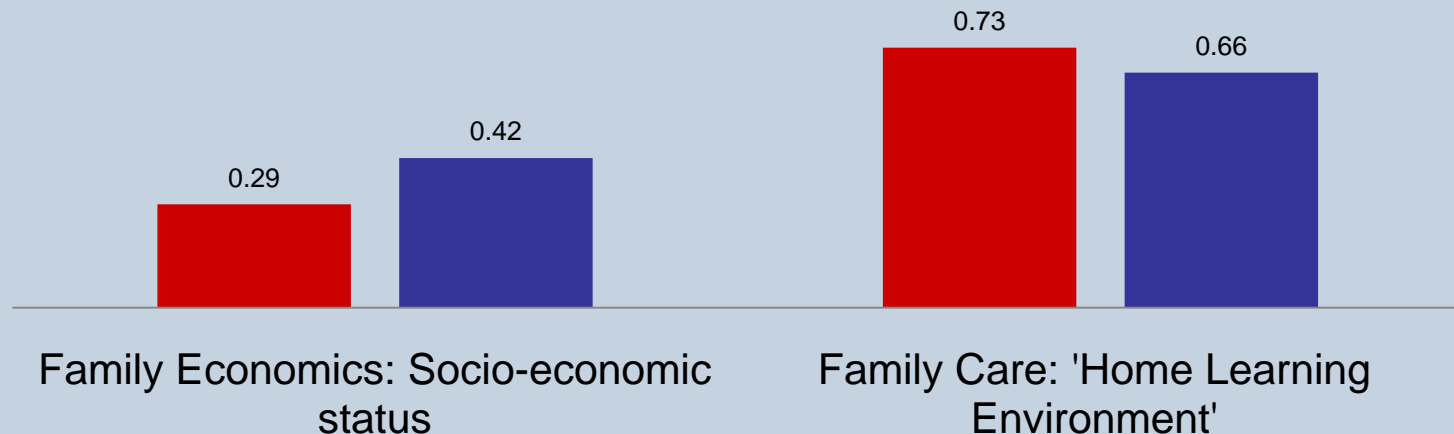


A fair distribution (of care)?

- At age five, the 'home learning environment' appears to have a greater effect on literacy and numeracy than socio-economic status

Effect size of family indicators on child literacy and numeracy at age five

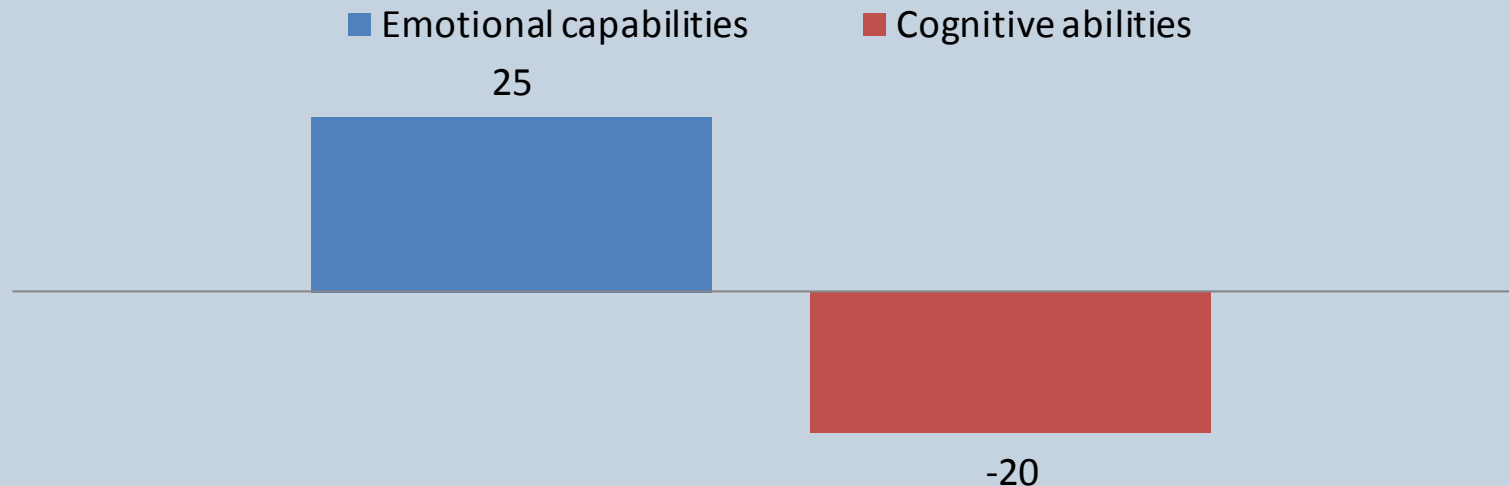
■ Literacy ■ Numeracy



A fair distribution (of care)?

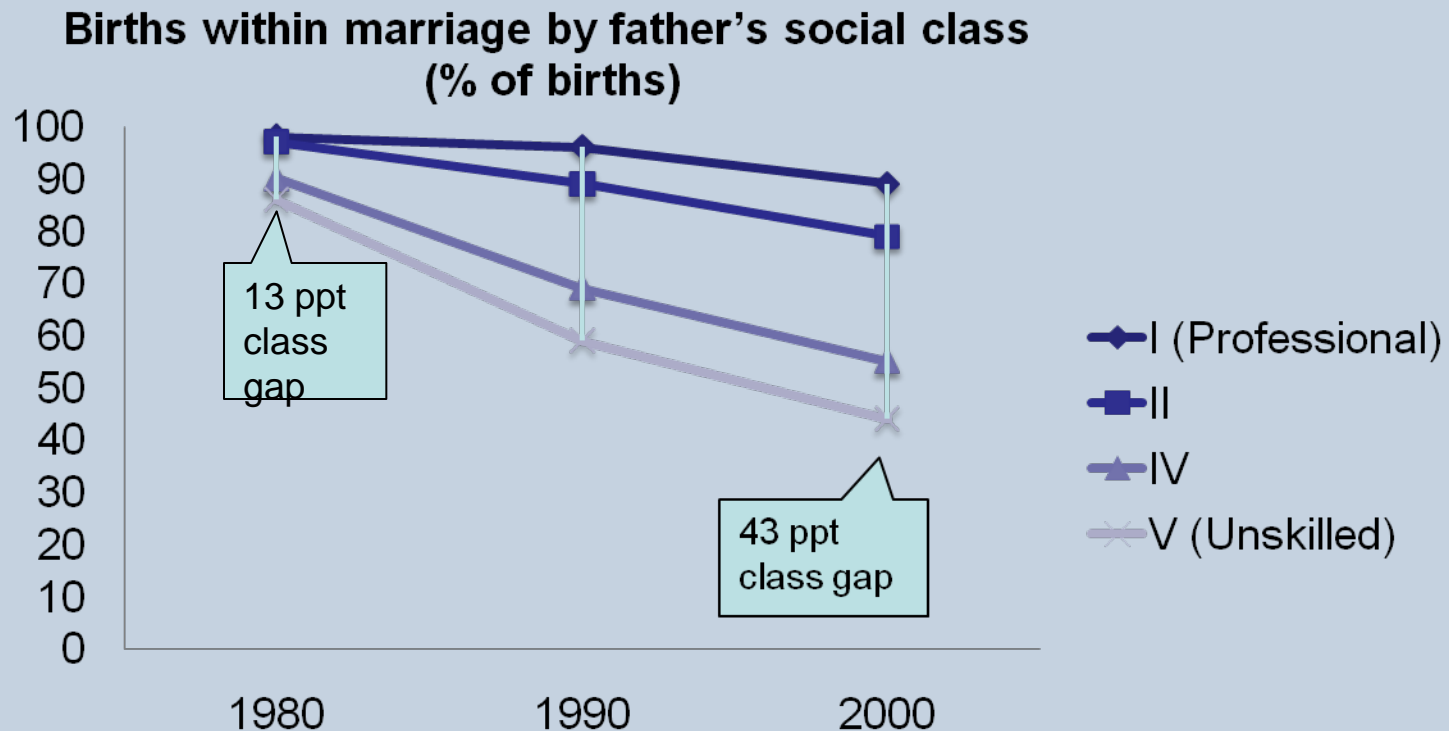
- **‘Emotional capabilities’ or non-cognitive skills have become more important in accounting for the distribution of income between generations**

% change in relative contribution of child capabilities in explaining adult earnings between 1958 and 1970 cohorts



A fair distribution (of caring)?

- **The class gap in access to ‘good’ family relationships has widened. Lower socio-economic groups account for much of the change in family structure over the last thirty years**

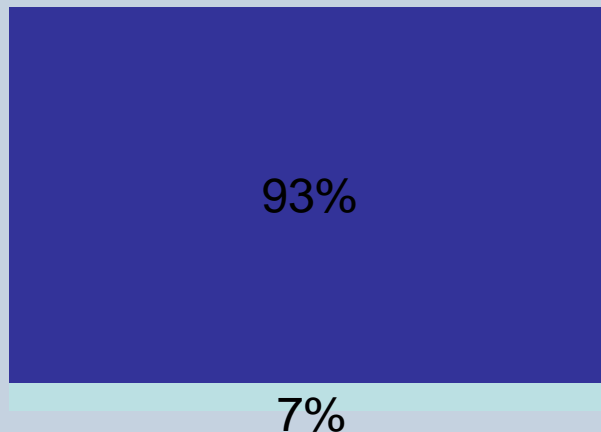


A fair distribution (of caring)?

Father's involvement with children has increased fast but in mothers are still by far the primary child-carers. The gender imbalance in primary caring for adults continues.

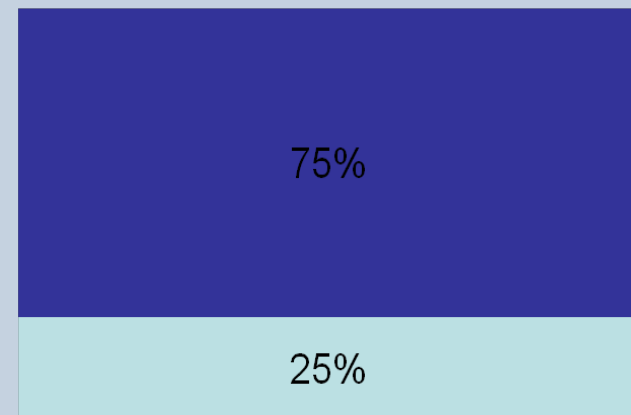
Primary Responsibility for childcare, 2009

Fathers Mothers



Carers Allowance Recipients

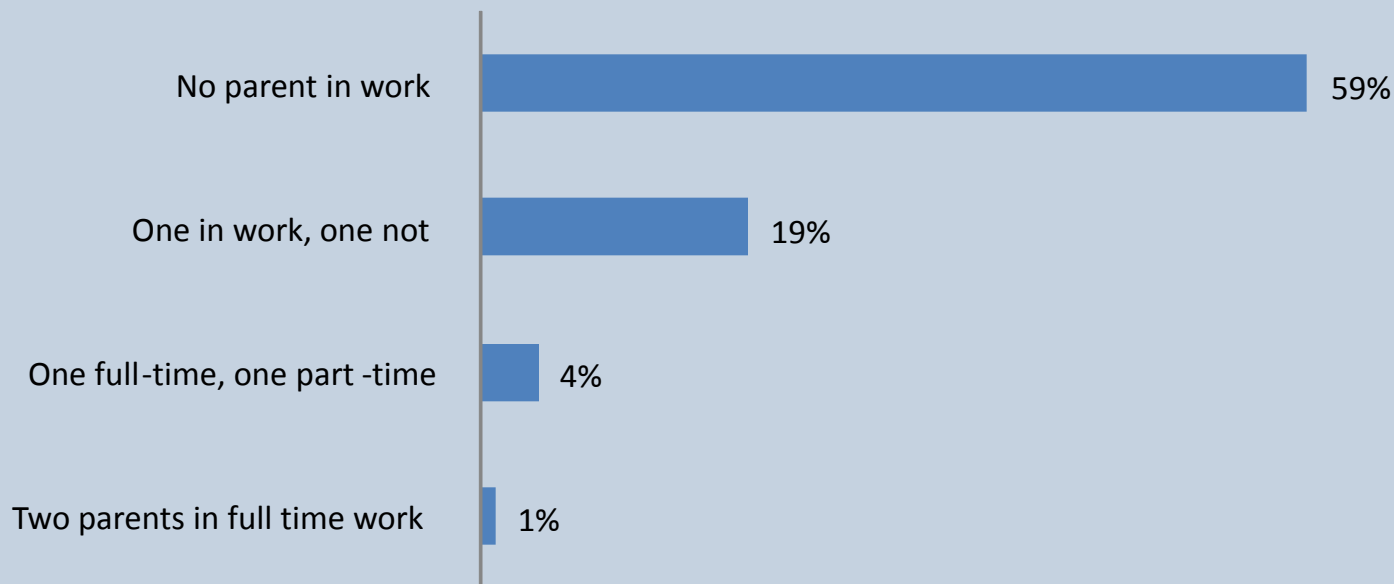
Men Women



A fair distribution (of caring)?

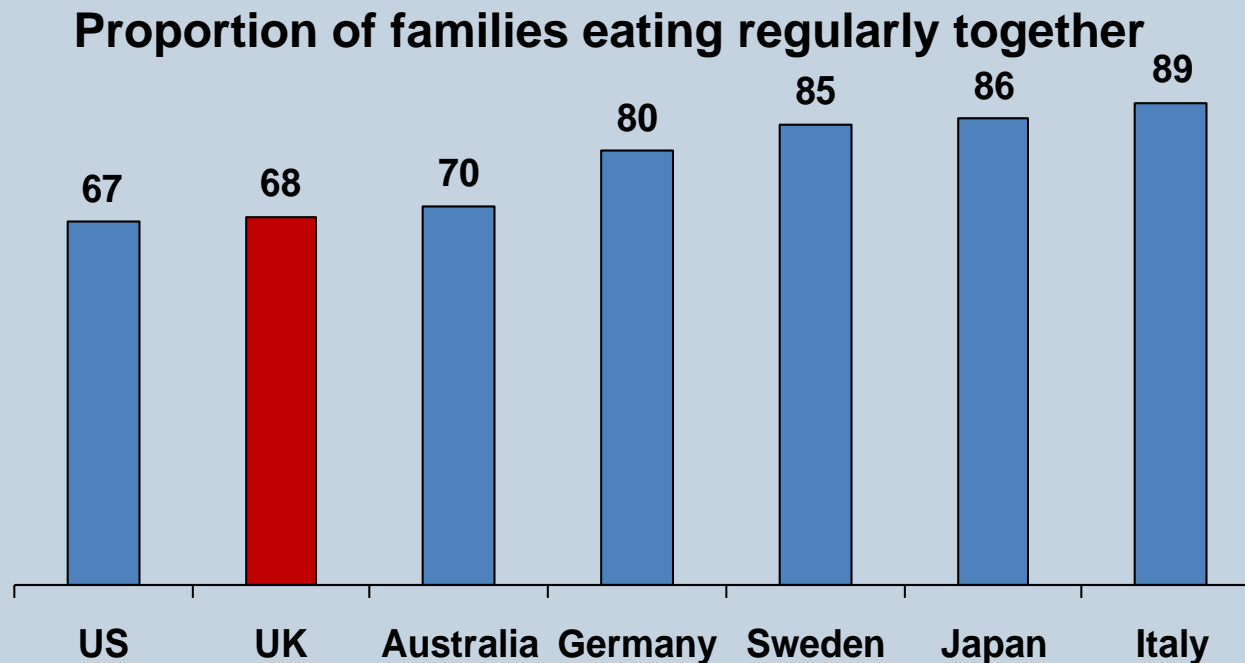
- **The ability of families to share work and care is one of the most relevant factors in family poverty levels**

Risk of child poverty by parents' work status



Freedom over a good (family) life?

- Britain compares badly on many indicators of good family life (which are strongly correlated with health & wellbeing indicators)

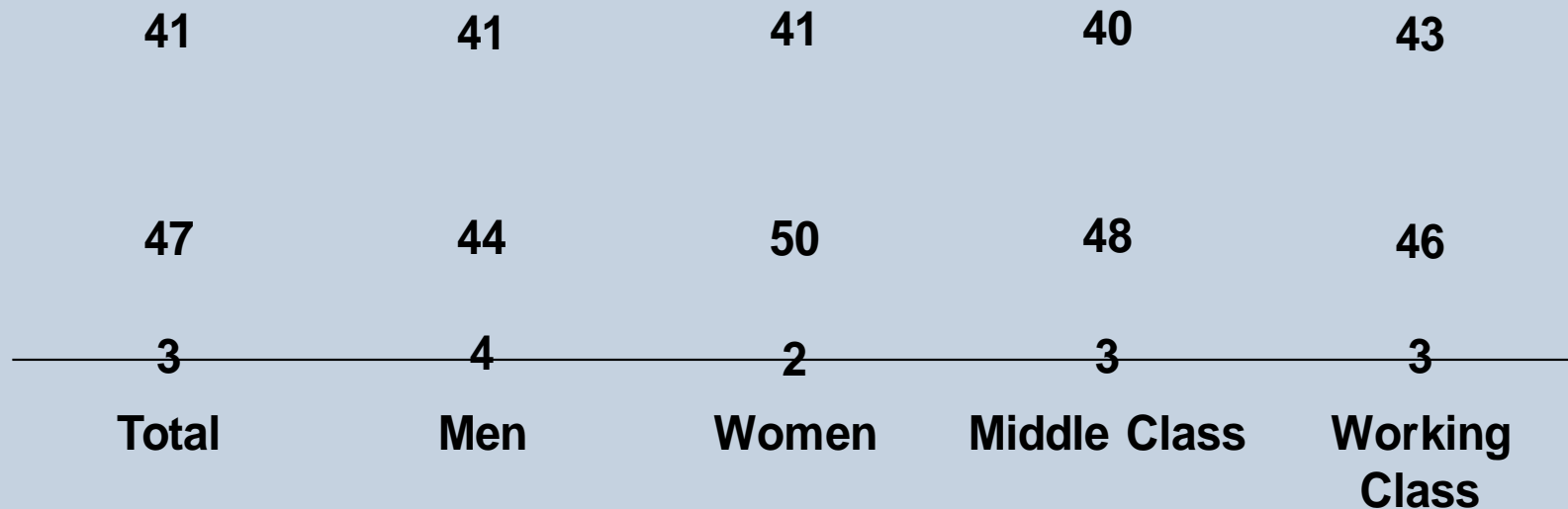


Freedom over a good (family) life?

- Far more men and women have an ethic of care than are able to practice it

Hypothetical preferences for work patterns with a child under five if working wasn't a financial necessity

■ Work full time ■ Work part time ■ Not work at all



Four types of care – for all ages

1. **Pedagogical** – the learning-care nexus, mentorship
2. **Practical** – medical, nursing, mobility, cleaning, cooking
3. **Personal** – help with eating, personal hygiene
 - 1-3 could be provided by professional/non-professional, state/market or family, friend or neighbour
4. **Relational** – built through listening, supporting, intimacy, love
 - Intrinsically relational; requires commitment as well as choice
 - Families (of different forms) the best provider; care is infungible
 - Can neither in-source to state nor out-source to market

A theory of family failure

Effective Families

- cannot be replicated by state or market; but
- can fail on both efficiency and equity grounds

State role to prevent and manage family 'failure'

Family-conscious work

1. **Institutional protection:** protecting private families as well as companies

Family-conscious welfare

2. **'Flexi-curity':** breaking monopolies in good families
3. **A common currency:** enabling exchange between cash and care

Family-conscious public services

4. **Security:** being tough on domestic crime
5. **Incentives:** matching care contributions
6. **Human capital:** investing in relationship & parenting skills
7. **Quasi-family mechanisms:** learning from families as well as markets in public services

1. Institutional protection: protecting private families as well as companies

- State has a role in protecting both private companies and families in the labour market
- Family time and responsibilities a liberty and public good an employment contract cannot undermine

Possible policy responses:

- A 'living hours' campaign
- Presumption of flexible working for all – focus on productivity not full(time) employment
- Transparency of take-up of flexible working/ parental leave policies
- Paternal leave on a 'paterfamilias' principle
- Care leave – matched and unpaid, time-limited over working life
- Flexible retirement and pension models not retirement 'age'

2. 'Flexi-curity': breaking monopolies on good families

- State has a legitimate interest in regulating and incentivising families – but must then be non-discriminatory
- State also has a role to help people manage transitions (inevitable 'creative destruction' when relationships break down)

Possible policy responses:

- Inclusive family values: to be pro-marriage is to be pro-gay marriage
- Removing barriers: an equality clause within the civil marriage contract: could have more effect than the equality duty on local authorities?
- Civil 'Christenings': to celebrate and augment family commitments
- Supporting family transitions: access to mediation and therapy
- More interventionist with families at risk: preventative social work; Family Intervention Projects with younger children; drive on adoptive parenting (link to NHS IVF?)

3. A common currency: enabling cash and care to be exchanged

- State should protect choice: helping families to balance work and care and to share care as well as buy it
- State should recognise & value care as well as work responsibilities

Possible policy responses:

- Individual care budgets – pooling the full range of adequate support for older and disabled people
- Families' budgets - wrap up (and better target) multiple funds birth to five alongside 15 hrs childcare entitlement. Reinstate universal child benefit for under 11s.
- Caring families tax break – design allowance to enable shared work and caring and 'top-up' part-time net income beyond Universal Credit
- Caring and relationship strength metrics part of the wellbeing index
- Monitoring employment and caring rates (c.f. with/out students)

4. Security: being tough on domestic crime

- State must act to prevent crimes *against* families, not undermining private institution
- Promoting equality within families a way to promote quality of families

Possible policy responses:

- Domestic violence and safeguarding as a joint public service (esp. police and social work) priority, social work professionalism and focus 'on the beat'
- Children's rights: a ban on smacking to lead a culture change in relation to children
- Tough on causes: challenging low expectations of relationships & masculinity

5. Incentives: matched care contributions

- Should seek a better state-family division of labour: public services should 'match' relational care with the practical, personal, pedagogical
- Expectations of families matched with stronger national minimum entitlements in care and family services

Possible policy responses:

- Adoptive and fostering family campaign backed with guaranteed support
- Sure Start: part-pay by results, for value-added outcomes in families and child development
- National partnership insurance scheme to finance care in old age: taking contributions in cash and care and insuring for family and social care
- Co-funded psychological therapy: e.g. 4 free sessions
- Opportunity for local authorities to re-focus around services to families
- Shift funding from less preventative (schools, hospital) budgets to fund

6. Human capital: investing in relationship and parenting skills

- State might find relationship skills to be at least as good an investment as that in traditional skills
- Developing people's immediate relationships the missing link to developing educational skills - and communities

Possible policy responses:

- *Early SureStart*: ante and post natal sessions, maternity and health visitors integrated with Children's Centres, trained in attachment & parenting alongside other core skills (c.f. Early HeadStart in the US)
- Professional-led peer support for parenting when child starts primary and secondary school (Expert Patient's model)
- Mainstreaming social, emotional 'resilience' skills in schools
- Lifelong relationship learning: paradox of over-romanticism stopping men and women, fathers and mothers realising their relationship aspirations

7. Quasi-family mechanisms: learning from families as well as markets in public services

- State should presume ‘coproduction’, with families as their key partner
- State could look to mirror empowering relationships, good family as well as market dynamics

Possible policy responses:

- High expectations: proportional support & challenge, led by a single, consistent, accountable practitioner for high risk groups. Citizens assessing practitioners and professionals (360 degree appraisals)
- Clear boundaries: setting minimal standards of national state offer, with simple, more direct accountability of services
- Team work: a shared public service professionalism, built through flexible career paths across public services
- Joint accounts & help with cash-flow: shared investment, savings and financial responsibility locally and nationally. Social impact *equity*, investment with a long-term, broad notion of return.

A new politics of family policy

Big society begins at home

- Fairness through families – not instead of families
- Family time as a freedom – not a state benefit or luxury
- Backing the ordinary good family – not tackling the bad
- Strong and caring families – not a ‘traditional’ family
- Caring & family responsibilities the norm - not the exception
- Concern with family cash **and** care – not either/or
- Global competitiveness for productive employees – not unproductive employers

Who volunteers to run the local day centre before caring for their own families?