

Ex-nuptial Children in Australia: An Empirical Analysis of Nonmarital Births

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The tight link between childbearing and being married has substantially unraveled in recent decades. This paper documents the extent to which this unraveling has occurred in Australia. It examines current levels of ex-nuptial births and the steep increase in such births. The link between ex-nuptial births on the one hand and maternal age and ethnicity on the other are explored. Accompanying the rise in ex-nuptial births has been a rise in lone-parent families. The paper examines the extent to which this rise is due to parental separation and the extent to which it is due to unpartnered mothers having children. The paper also explores whether children born to cohabiting but unmarried parents experience a greater rate of parental separation than do those born to married parents. Data are also provided that suggest that the sharp rise in ex-nuptial births has taken place within a social context in which such births are increasingly accepted.

Key Words: Ex-nuptial Births; Lone Parents; Cohabitation; Adoption; Teenage Mothers