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Contact: Clair S. Sassin  
clair@sassinconsulting.com  
703-820-6052, x1

## **Survey Highlights the New Face of Women Choosing to be Single Mothers**

### **Choice Moms are Upper Middle Class, mid-to-late Thirties & Well Educated**

**(Washington, DC, Nov. 25, 2009)** — An article in the December issue of *The Human Fertility Journal* reports on a first-ever large-scale survey of women choosing to be single moms. These women — typically called choice moms or single mothers by choice — actively set out to give birth to or adopt a child without a partner, and differ from single mothers who find themselves alone following divorce or separation. The survey participants tended to be European-American, upper middle class, in their mid-to-late thirties, well educated, and financially secure.

The survey, which was conducted by researchers from The Centre for Family Research at the University of Cambridge, collected data on the motivations and experiences of 291 choice moms using online questionnaires. Most of the participants were based in the United States, with the remainder living in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and several other primarily European countries. The article is titled “Mom by choice, single by life’s circumstance’: Findings from a large scale survey of the experiences of single mothers by choice.”

The majority of women (76%) in the survey had been in long-term relationships, but rather than have a child with the “wrong” partner chose to have a child alone. All of the women were happy with their decision to have a child alone, although more than half stated that they would have preferred to have a child within a relationship, and most felt it was important that their child have regular contact with a male role model.

Earlier studies have shown that teenagers of single parents are twice as likely to drop out of high school, twice as likely to have a child before age 20, and one and a half times as likely to be “idle” — out of school and out of work in their late teens and early 20s. Factors that have been found to

be associated with negative consequences for children of single mothers include economic hardship and exposure to marital conflict before, during and after separation or divorce.

Findings of the survey include:

- **Educational level** – the majority of participants (59%) had completed a postgraduate degree; 29% had an undergraduate degree.
- **Method to motherhood** – the most common method (60%) to conceive was through anonymous sperm donation; 15% conceived using a known donor; 12% of women became Choice Moms through adoption.
- **Practical changes made to become a mother** — 47% indicated they had saved money; 38% moved to new housing/neighborhood; 38% made child care arrangements; 34% made career changes.
- **Experiences as a single mom** – 38% reported it was ‘sometimes difficult’ to be a single mother; 31% said it was ‘sometimes easy’; 25% said they were finding it ‘easy’; and 3% said it was ‘difficult.’ In another question, 49% said they were experiencing ‘similar difficulties’ to other mothers, 24% thought they had fewer difficulties than other mothers, and another 24% reported experiencing ‘more difficulties’ than other mothers.

When asked how important it was to meet a partner in the future, the most common response was that it was ‘not very important’ (50%), followed by ‘quite important’ (30%), ‘very important’ (10%), and ‘not important at all’ (9%).

Mothers of girls in particular reported concern about their child being able to form healthy relationships with men. As one woman of an eight-year-old daughter wrote, “I hope she doesn’t think men are useless or bad. I try to let her know that marriages can be great.”

For more information about the survey, contact co-author Dr. Vasanti Jadva at [vj227@cam.ac.uk](mailto:vj227@cam.ac.uk). **The Centre for Family Research at the University of Cambridge** is a multidisciplinary research centre within the Faculty of Politics, Psychology, Sociology and International Studies of Cambridge University. It has an international reputation for its research on parents, children and family relationships. [ppsis.cam.ac.uk/CFR/](http://ppsis.cam.ac.uk/CFR/)

**Other resources:** **Choice Moms** is a Minneapolis-based organization, led by Mikki Morrissette, which provides educational resources, including the “Choosing Single Motherhood” radio show, for single women who proactively build a family on their own. [choicemoms.org](http://choicemoms.org)  
**Single Mothers by Choice** is a New York City-based organization, led by Jane Mattes, which provides support group networks for women who make this decision. [singlemothersbychoice.com](http://singlemothersbychoice.com)  
*Human Fertility* journal is a leading international, multidisciplinary journal dedicated to furthering research and promoting good practice in the areas of human fertility and infertility, published by Informa Healthcare.

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