



VOLUME 28 - ARTICLE 15 | PAGES 421-432

## Post-divorce custody arrangements and binuclear family structures of Flemish adolescents

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DATE RECEIVED: 09 Sep 2012

DATE PUBLISHED: 06 Mar 2013

WORD COUNT: 2472

KEYWORDS: adolescents, custody arrangements, post-divorce family configurations, stepfamily

DOI: 10.4054/DemRes.2013.28.15

### Abstract

**Background:** Because of the tendency towards equal parental rights in post-divorce custody decisions, the number of children living partially in two households after divorce has increased. Because of this evolution, traditional family typologies have been challenged.

**Objective:** In this study, we want to describe the post-divorce custody arrangements and family configurations of Flemish adolescents (between 12 and 18 years old).

**Methods:** We use four waves of the Leuven Adolescents and Families Study, a yearly survey in which adolescents are questioned at school about their family life, family relationships and various dimensions of their wellbeing. Our research sample consists of 1525 adolescents who experienced a parental break-up. First, we present information on the proportion of adolescents in different custody arrangements, according to divorce cohort, age and sex. Next, we describe post-divorce family configurations, according to the custody arrangement and different criteria of co-residence between children and step-parents.

**Results:** We observe a higher proportion of adolescents spending at least 33% of time in both parental households (shared residence) for more recent divorce cohorts. A large proportion of adolescents is living with a new partner of the mother or father, but there are important differences, according to the criteria used to define stepfamily configurations.

**Conclusions:** The relatively high incidence figures of children in shared residence challenge the current dichotomous post-divorce family concept in terms of single parent families and stepfamilies. Family typologies applying a binuclear perspective are therefore increasingly meaningful and necessary. In addition, shared residence increases the chance of co-residence with at least one step-parent, and increases the proportion of children with a part-time residential stepmother.

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