

ESRC SEMINARS 4 & 5

Poverty And Child Maintenance: Interaction With Social Assistance Schemes

2nd and 3rd July 2015

Overview and areas for discussion.

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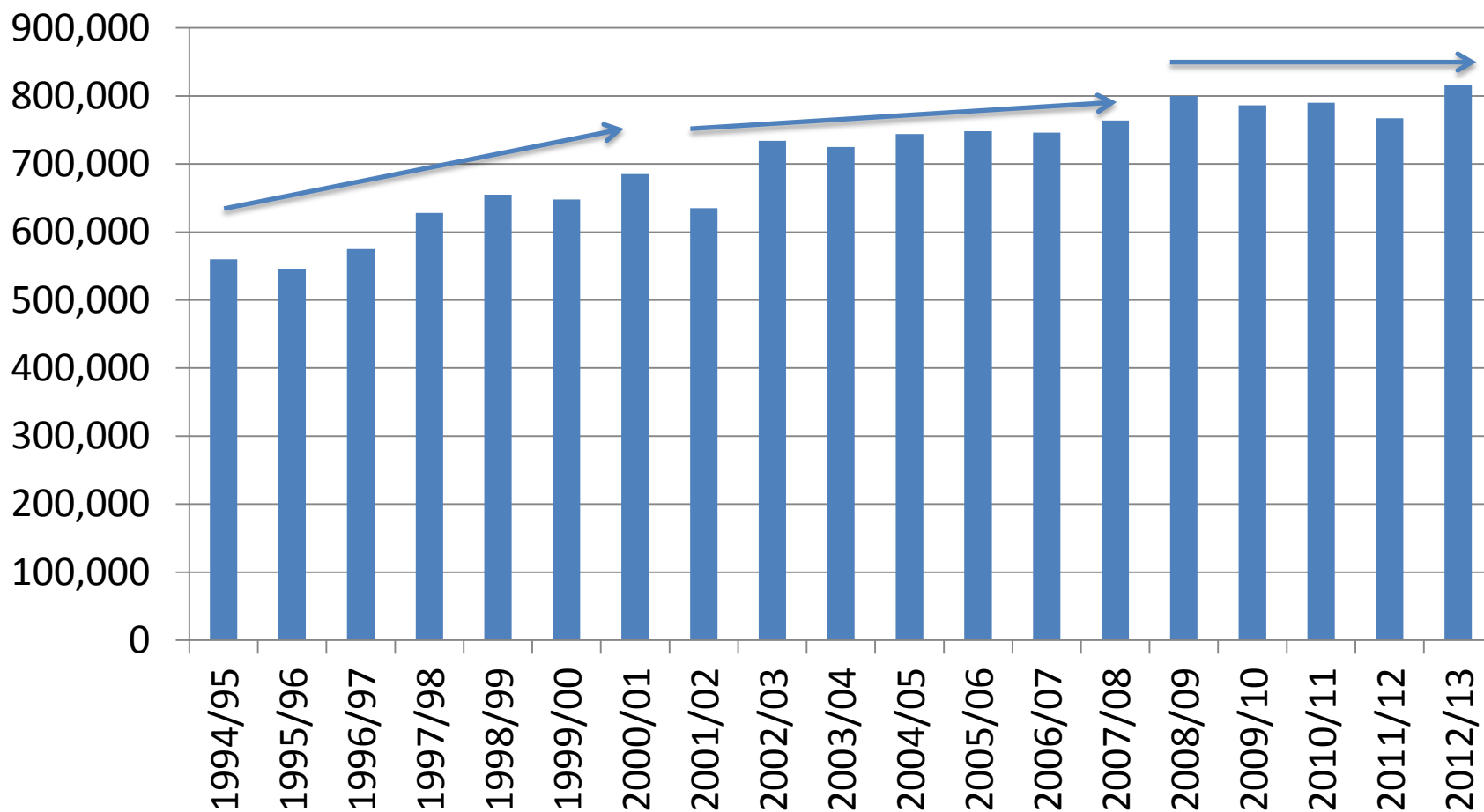
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- With thanks to fellow participants

Some themes

- Re-visiting the aims of child maintenance
 - From recovering social assistance, to poverty alleviation, work incentives, to wider goals around parenting and child well-being? [and gender equality]
 - Shifting focus from adults to parents to children?
 - Still to be made, or being given less prominence (e.g. child poverty in Australia, US).
 - Remaining concern with ‘fairness’ in the systems
 - But, in a world of **extensive** non-take-up and non-compliance, let’s not forget the cash.

Number saying they receive child maintenance (UK, Family Resources Survey)



Cultural change?

– If mother remarries, child maintenance should ...

	1994	1995	1999	2000	2003	2006	2010
Continue	38	39	50	51	53	54	56
Stop	15	14	12	12	9	9	8
Depends on step-father income	46	46	38	38	38	37	37

Increasing support for principle that non-resident fathers' child support obligation does not cease with the arrival of a step-father;

BUT substantial minority of people still think that the step-father's income matters

Areas for future attention 1

- We seem to know a lot less about property/housing and asset transfers – for those where relevant – than about incomes and child maintenance.
- Why does compliance remain such a problem, with such a powerful array of recovery methods *and* an increased emphasis on fatherhood?
 - Does the perceived fairness of the system matter for compliance? (including ‘disregards’).
 - Does formal support really ‘crowd out’ informal support?

Areas for future attention 2

- Longer-term trends
- Rise of informal unions compared to marriage, at least in some countries. Marriage a reducing and more advantaged pool?
- More precarious employment situations [varying hours, self-employment, etc.], with more variable incomes, as affecting potential payers/fathers.

Areas for future attention 3

- What happens when people exit the system (often when children turn 18)? Cost of children doesn't disappear.
- UK's move to private emphasis – how will that affect parental relationships, child maintenance paid, child poverty?