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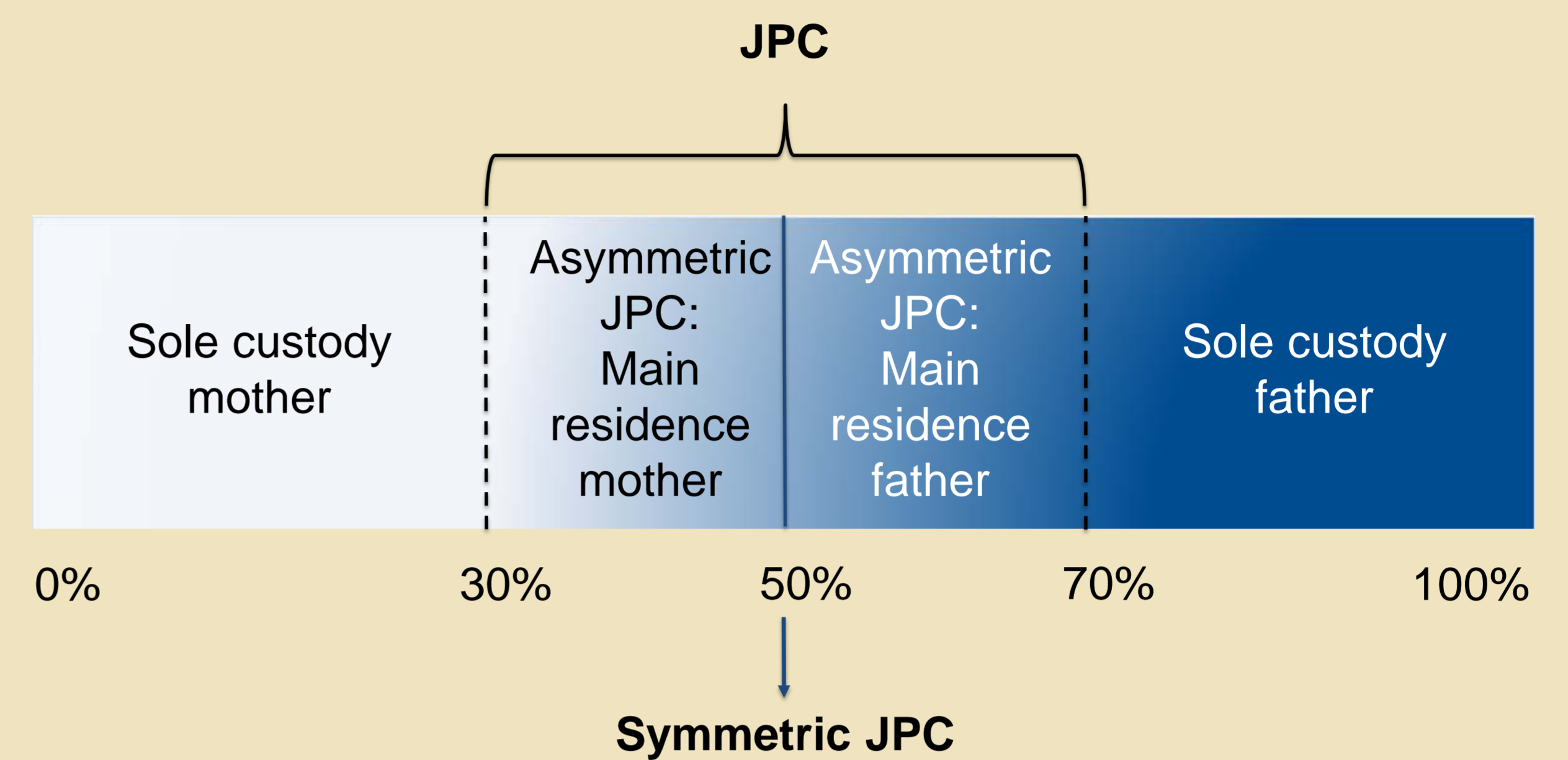
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# The Prevalence of Joint Physical Custody Arrangements in Post-Separation Families in 38 Western Societies

## Background

- **Highly stable separation and divorce rates:** More non-traditional family forms in Western societies with two parental households.
- **New parental care arrangement:** Joint physical custody (JPC), where a child lives with each parent about equally after separation or divorce, is an increasingly common phenomenon.
- **Lack of information:** The numbers on the prevalence of JPC for most countries are still missing because data on care arrangements across households after a parental break-up are very scarce.
- **Objective:** Estimating the proportion of JPC in different countries and assessing the complexity of family constellations in different care arrangements.

## Types of Physical Custody after Parental Separation

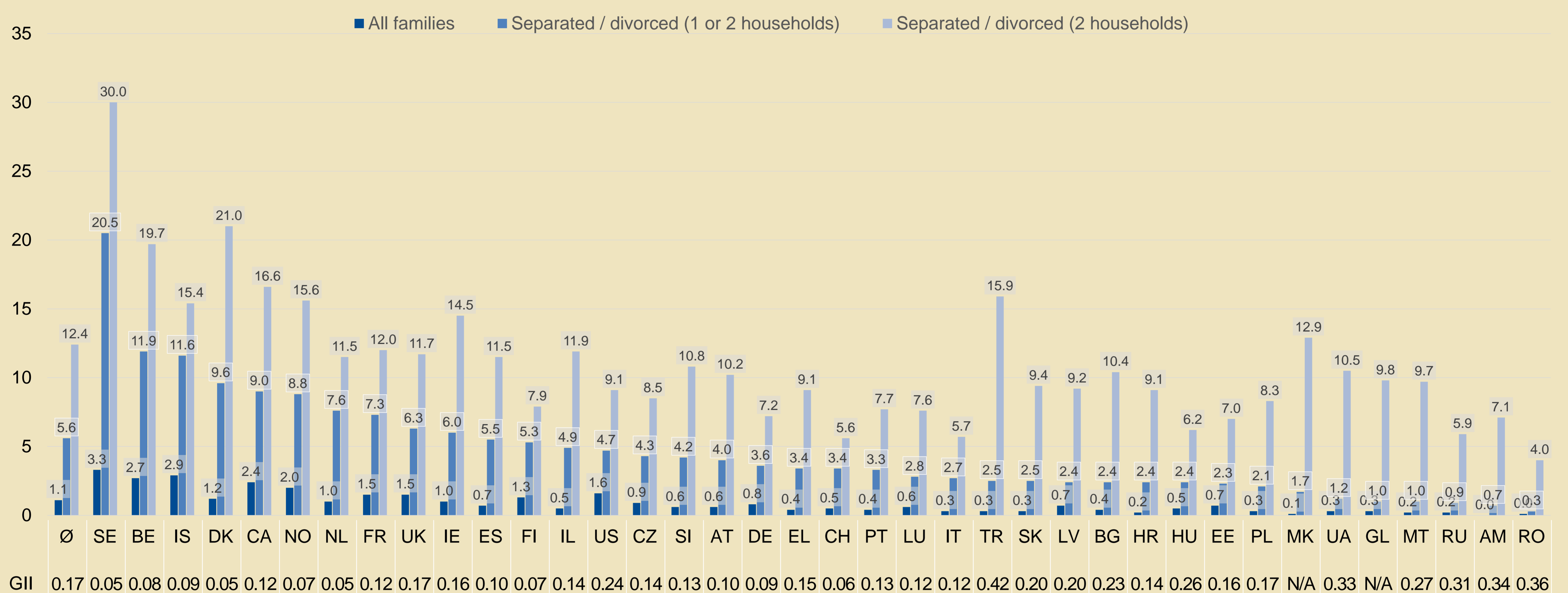


## Data & Sample

- **Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study**, conducted by an international multidisciplinary network of research teams in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office of Europe (<http://www.hbsc.org/>).
- **Data:** Survey years 2001, 2006, and 2010 ▪ 38 countries ▪ Cross-national and cross-sectional ▪ Includes information on first and second home
- **Operationalization of JPC:** Care arrangement after separation/divorce, in which a child reports to stay "half of the time" with each biological parent (symmetrical JPC).
- The final analytic sample consisted of **539,756** children living in various family configurations.

## Results

Figure 1: Prevalence of joint physical custody (JPC) arrangements in 38 North American and European countries (in %)



Note: Own calculations based on Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) (2001, 2006, 2010) & Gender Inequality Index (GII) (2010)

Table 1: Prevalence of stepparents and siblings in post-separation families (mean & percentage)

	Joint physical custody	Separated / divorced (1 or 2 households)	Separated / divorced (2 households)
Number of stepparents	0.9	0.6	0.9
No stepmother or stepfather	38.3%	56.4%	34.4%
Stepmother or stepfather	37.0%	32.1%	38.8%
Stepmother and stepfather	24.7%	11.5%	26.6%
n	5,483	96,742	41,167
Number of siblings	2.6	1.9	2.3
n	5,715	92,067	40,321

Note: Own calculations based on Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) (2001, 2006, 2010)

## Conclusion

- Results show that there are **at least some JPC families in all countries**, even though the **distribution varies widely between countries**.
- A **higher prevalence of JPC** in Northern and Western European countries (e.g., Belgium, Denmark, Norway, France) as well as in North American countries (Canada, USA), a **lower prevalence of JPC** in Eastern and Southern European countries (e.g., Greece, Italy, Poland, Bulgaria).
- JPC seems to be a result of an **increasing gender equality** (increasing participation of mothers in the labor force and involvement of fathers in their children's lives), as the Gender Inequality Index (GII) is lower in countries with a higher prevalence of JPC.
- **Complexity of post-separation family constellations:** Children with two parental homes, independent of the time they spend in each household, have more stepparents and more siblings, including half- and stepsiblings.
- With increasing numbers of post-separation and post-divorce families with two homes, **family complexity also increases**.