



WORLD BULLETIN  
PUBLISHING

Online Publishing Hub

# World Bulletin of Education and Learning (WBEL)

ISSN (E): 3072-175X

Volume 01, Issue 01, October 2025



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<https://worldbulletin.org/index.php/1>

## THE SOCIAL PORTRAIT OF SINGLE WOMEN

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### Abstract

This article presents the main methodological approaches to developing the social portrait of single mothers in the context of Uzbek society. Particular attention is paid to the essential components of the social portrait, such as economic status, ideological attitudes, life strategies, the social well-being of this category of parents, and their opportunities to raise children in a favorable social environment. The concept of designing this social portrait can be used by state institutions to determine effective methods of creating conditions and providing support for families of single mothers—who represent an important social group in modern society—in raising their children.

Keywords: Single mothers as a social category, economic status, life strategies, social well-being, ideological attitudes, favorable conditions for child-rearing, social portrait of single mothers.

### Introduction

The social condition of single women is complex and diverse, encompassing general sociodemographic characteristics as well as behavioral, emotional, and ideological features. These may include social activity or, conversely, isolation, as well as insecurity or an excessive desire to demonstrate attractiveness. Loneliness may depend on age (after the age of forty, the number of single women may exceed that of men) and on personal circumstances such as divorce.

Loneliness is one of those phenomena whose true meaning appears obvious to everyone, yet such clarity is deceptive, as it conceals a complex and often contradictory essence that is difficult for ordinary consciousness to grasp. The



issue of loneliness has been recognized by almost all researchers as one of the most pressing problems of modern social life, as it touches upon the very foundations of human existence. Loneliness contradicts the essence of human beings as social creatures. Historically, people have evolved within large groups, and the need for constant interaction with others has become deeply ingrained in human nature. Therefore, losing connection with others—whether physical or social—is among the most difficult experiences. As Aristotle metaphorically stated, a person outside society is either a god or a beast. Humanity consists of both women and men who live within the same society, yet their lives differ significantly.

Today, the profound changes taking place in the socio-economic sphere have led to a number of fundamentally new phenomena that, in one way or another, affect the status of women in society. In particular, there is a clear trend toward segregation in the labor market, where women often find themselves in the secondary, less prestigious sector. The feminization of poverty is increasing; women prevail among the low-paid, unemployed, and low-income groups. These tendencies disproportionately affect single women, as they are deprived of families or family-like units—key sources of social support that act as a “buffer” against stress factors.

Women’s loneliness as a social problem is multifaceted and requires a comprehensive research approach. Approximately ten million women of working age live alone. The family situation is characterized by a high divorce rate, low levels of remarriage, and an increasing share of women who have divorced for the second or third time, as well as a generally higher rate of divorce among women.

The sociological approach to the problem of women’s loneliness has necessitated the development of a definition for the social group of “single women.” For this purpose, its main features have been identified, including the presence or absence of a permanent partner, age limits, and a specific psychological condition shaped by daily negative experiences, often perceived as destruction and hopelessness. The correlation and consistency between the negative emotional factors that form women’s psychological states and the changing social environment have been


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established. Social discrimination against women has provided the foundation for many of the problems faced by single women. One such problem is progressive unemployment, accompanied by elements of degradation and desocialization and the constant risk of dismissal. Moreover, compared to the public sector, single women in private enterprises are more vulnerable to arbitrary actions by employers who violate basic labor laws.

Other negative social factors affecting single women include the lack of social guarantees from the state, the reduction of services that make household work easier, and issues related to child care.

Difficult living conditions can affect women’s behavior in various ways, but a common feature is a high level of anxiety, which leads to various mental health problems. The study of single women’s social problems is closely linked to the analysis of their needs and life orientations. The analysis shows that the main life orientation of single women is to overcome loneliness. This was identified in 72.6% of respondents, 42.2% of whom saw the solution only in marriage and a settled life. In doing so, they aim to solve their main problems: the desire for emotional connection, improvement of material living standards, and securing their children’s future. Despite the increase in the number of unregistered marriages, they still prefer officially registered ones. It should be noted that single women value family more than married women. They associate marriage more strongly with the positive aspects of family life, which meet their basic personal needs, including the need for reliable communication, participation, and empathy between spouses. The family satisfies many of a person’s most important socio-psychological needs: parental and filial love, shared joy and sorrow, cultural and psychological unity, and collective activity. Moreover, single women value the family not only as the material foundation for raising children but also as an integral and permanent factor of their socialization and individualization. This allows children to gradually integrate into the system of social relations and various human activities.

An important aspect of studying women’s loneliness is its methodology. The “closed” and sensitive nature of the subject—connected to the specific emotions and intimate experiences of single women—makes it difficult, and in many cases

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impossible, to use direct sociological methods. Therefore, to some extent, only the author’s personal interest in analyzing marriage advertisements makes it possible to “approach” the research topic. The numerous shortcomings of such data are compensated by the statistical representativeness of the sample, which allows for a more objective description of the needs and expectations of the studied social group. In addition, the author was able to engage in both open and confidential interviews with members of the research group.

Women characterized by heightened shyness and insecurity (loneliness based on complexes) demonstrate a distinctly patriarchal orientation toward marriage. They are ready to act as keepers of the home, take full responsibility for children, and avoid leadership roles within the family. They share what are sometimes called lumpen values: “live and endure,” “if you endure, you will come to love,” and “if he beats you, it means he loves you.” Single women with idealized notions of romantic love (loneliness based on ideals) have marriage orientations that are detached from reality. Their focus on an idealized image leads to fatalism and submission in relationships. Continuing to exist in a comfortable, mythologized world, they demonstrate social maladaptation, as eternal concepts such as love, mutual assistance, and family relations have not changed; rather, the social emphasis and meanings of certain familiar concepts have shifted.

Women from socially successful classes, focused on personal achievement and success (loneliness based on ambition), have completely different orientations. This is primarily related to their social background, professional environment, and family, which should serve as a place of complete rest and social protection. In the social sphere, it manifests as the ability to maintain social distance in all things: in daily life, leisure, professional activities, family, and culture.

By studying the ways and forms through which single women realize their aspirations toward marriage, five main empirical patterns were identified among respondents. Analysis of the motivational purposes of women’s marriage advertisements showed that the established goal determines the pattern of their gender-role behavior, which is reflected in their personal qualities and in the “marriage market” as perceived by potential partners. Existing information on typical recommendations for overcoming loneliness is mainly based on hobby

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clubs. Young people have many opportunities to meet new people—education, sports, tourism, and entertainment. However, such recommendations are often inapplicable to the category of women studied.

Family counseling sessions involving doctors, psychologists, and possibly sociologists should aim to prevent family conflicts or mitigate their consequences. Subsequent psychological support structures should be designed to provide assistance to divorced individuals. Programs should be developed to eliminate loneliness resulting from marital breakdown. These programs should aim to alleviate the confusion, self-doubt, and feelings of rejection that accompany divorce. Information presented in these sessions should help divorced men and women understand the confusing and distressing reactions they experience. People often face confusion and anxiety, and learning that such emotions are widespread helps them feel relieved. Bringing people together in support groups reduces feelings of isolation and also provides an opportunity to connect with members of the opposite sex. The value of such communication lies in helping them take steps to improve their lives.

Finally, structures that provide psychological support to individuals seeking life partners are essential. Psychological adjustment for unmarried women can help them realistically evaluate themselves and their expectations toward potential partners. The task of the psychologist is to help them understand the hidden inner mechanisms of their behavior and communication in order to reconstruct these patterns in the most effective way.

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