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Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy / Volume 4, Issue 1 / pp. 47-68

Low-Wage Single-Mother Families in This Jobless Recovery: Can Improved Social Policies Help?

Hilda Kahne

First published: 30 November 2004

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-2415.2004.00034.x

The author expresses her deep appreciation to Janet Giele, Merton Kahne, Ruth Roemer, Marjorie Rosenbaum, George Wallis, and Joan Walsh for insightful comments and improvements in the manuscript. The contributions of Bethany Rapoza and of Brandeis University Student Partners Zachary Mabel and Sarah Gladish have been extremely helpful as have been the comments of two reviewers of this article.

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Abstract

Low-wage single-mother families face greater relative disadvantage in this jobless recovery than do other earning and marital groups. Stressful uncertainties are intensified for them not only by a lack of financial reserves related to low pay and having only one family earner but by the characteristics of their labor market, a growing disparity in income distribution nationally that increases their relative disadvantage, intensified job competition from more skilled unemployed workers. Incomplete education and fewer and less adequate training programs than are available for more educated workers make it more difficult to improve or diversify skills. Given the limitations of wage-related social policies, there is a need for expanded education and training programs to increase skills and raise the earnings potential to a more family-sustaining level.

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