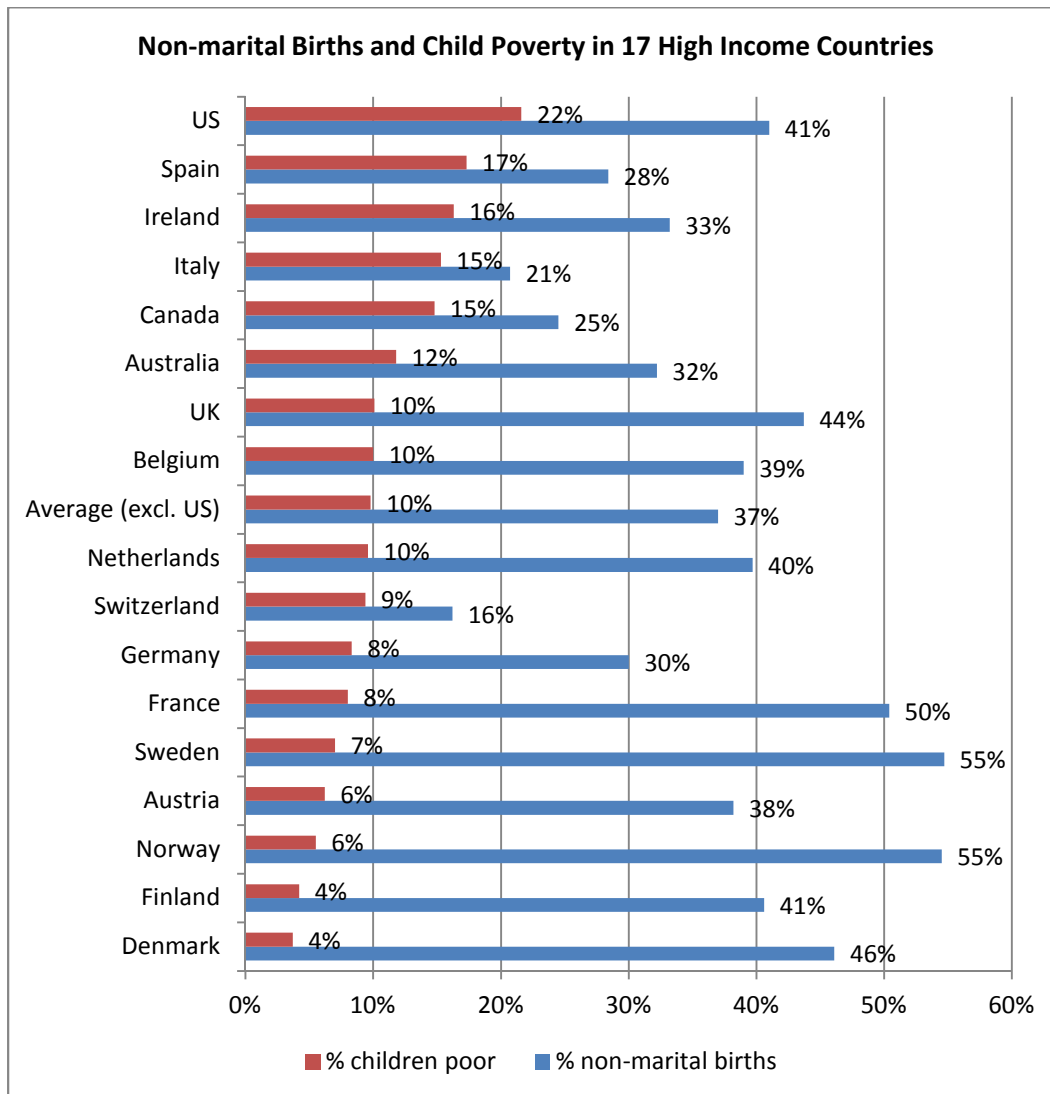


**BEYOND THE MYTHS ABOUT SINGLE MOTHERHOOD, No. 1**

*FACT: Out-of-Wedlock Birth Is Not The Reason That The U.S. Has An Exceptionally High Child Poverty Rate*

The figure below shows the share of births that were non-marital births and the share of children who were poor in the 17 countries in Europe, the Americas, and Oceania that have a per capita gross national income above \$30,000 and a population of at least several million. The birth data are from the National Vital Statistics Report for 2009 for the U.S., and from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for 2007 for the other countries.<sup>1</sup> The poverty data are from OECD for 2008 for the U.S. and for the most recent year in the mid or late 2000's for which the information was available for the other countries.<sup>2</sup>



The non-marital birth share averaged 37% in the 16 countries other than the U.S.. The 41% U.S. share was above this average but not exceptionally so. Five other countries had a higher share – Sweden (55%), Norway (55%), France (50%), Denmark (46%) and the UK (44%) – and a sixth, Finland, had the same share.

The child poverty rate averaged 10% in the 16 countries other than the U.S. The 22% U.S. rate was the highest rate and was more than twice the 10% average. The child poverty rate was at or below the 10% average in each of the six countries in which the non-marital birth share was higher than or the same as in the U.S. – 4% in Finland, 4% in Denmark, 6% in Norway, 7% in Sweden, 8% in France, and 10% in the UK.

The child poverty rates shown in the figure are the percentage of children in families with an income less than half of median income (adjusted for family size), a commonly used poverty standard in cross-national comparisons. The half-of-median-income poverty standard used by OECD differs from the official U.S. poverty standard. By the official U.S. standard, the child poverty rate was 19% in 2008, compared to 22% under the OECD standard. The official U.S. child poverty rate increased to 22% in 2010, and it is expected that the soon-to-be-released official poverty figures for 2011 will show an even higher official child poverty rate.

(August 2012. Contact Timothy Casey, [tcasey@legalmomentum.org](mailto:tcasey@legalmomentum.org), for further information.)

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<sup>1</sup> OECD spreadsheet accessed at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932392552> on August 29, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> OECD (2011). *Doing Better For Families* at 176.