

# Maintenance support payments. An effective tool in the fight against child poverty in Belgium?

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Online Meeting Child Support Worldwide Network

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# Content



# Content

- The public maintenance support system DAVO/SECAL: origin and evolution
- Extent of maintenance entitlement and non-payment
- Importance of maintenance in poverty reduction
- Problems solved and to be solved

# The public maintenance support system DAVO/SECAL

Origin and evolution

# Belgian Maintenance Claims Department

Service des créances alimentaires – SECAL/Dienst voor alimentatievorderingen  
– DAVO

## Providing **solution to problems**

- Poverty caused by non-payment of maintenance to children and/or an ex-partner
- Failure to enforce court decisions and notarial acts

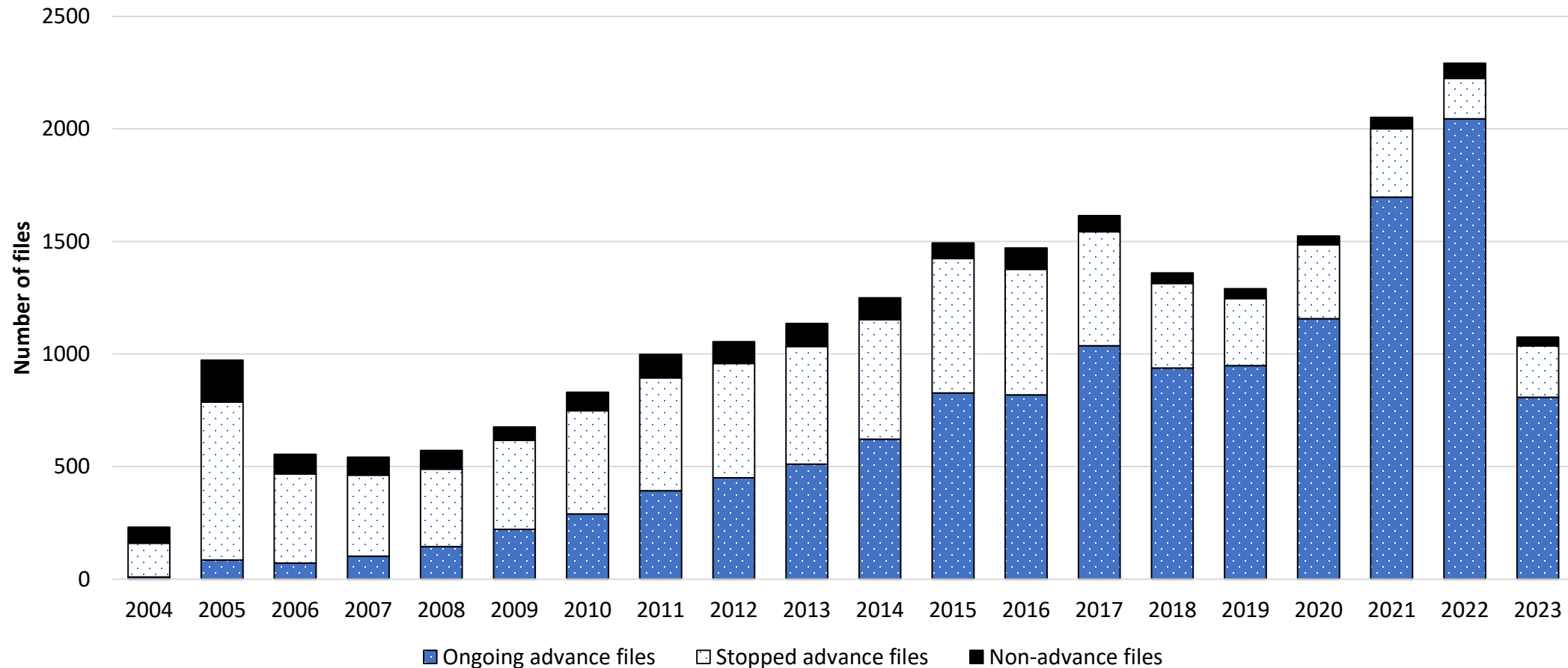
## Two **tasks**

- Collecting or recovering the periodic maintenance (and arrears) from the maintenance debtor of child support or spousal support
- Paying advances on maintenance allowance for children to the maintenance creditor

# Legislative amendments SECAL

	Income ceiling for entitlement to advances on maintenance allowance	Intervention in operating costs		Opportunities to recover maintenance and arrears from maintenance debtor
		Maintenance creditor	Maintenance debtor	
Before 1/01/2015	€ 1 386 base amount with indexation	5% for operating costs	10% for operating costs	Not possible for a debtor who receives a living wage or has means lower than the amount of the living wage
1/01/2015-31/12/2019	€ 1 800 base amount without indexation	No operating costs	13% for operating costs	Seizure of the full income of the debtor is possible
1/1/2020-31/05/2020	€ 2 200 base amount with indexation	No operating costs	13% for operating costs	Seizure of the full income of the debtor is possible
1/06/2020-...	No income ceiling	No operating costs	13% for operating costs	Seizure of the full income of the debtor is possible

# Number of files in SECAL-database by type according to date of file opening, July 2023



## Number of applications, advances paid, average number of children for whom advances were paid by SECAL, average advance per child per month, 2012-2023

	Number of applications	Advances paid (in €) (A)	Average number of children for whom advances were paid by SECAL** (B)	Average advance per child per month (in €) ((A/B)/12)
2012	3 628	21 414 884	13 981	128
2013	3 554	22 637 127	14 734	128
2014	3 692	23 502 649	15 159	129
2015	3 921	26 216 381	17 409	125
2016	3 595	27 852 204	18 281	127
2017	4 160	29 306 041	18 931	129
2018	3 762	29 855 001	18 650	133
2019	2 749	29 368 867	18 404	133
2020	3 424	31 346 109	19 274	136
2021	3 575	33 938 455	21 035	134
2022	4 474	35 341 869	20 975	140
2023	4 054*	37 335 744	21 247	147

\* Data until 25/09/2023.

\*\* It concerns the average number of children for whom advances were paid during a certain year. Through personal communication (FPS Finance Collection and Recovery, 19 February 2024) the number of children who received at least an advance for 1 month is known as well. It concerns 26 807 children in 2021, 27 445 children in 2022, and 28 020 children in 2024.



# Extent of maintenance entitlement and non-payment

# Profile of households entitled to maintenance and confronted with non-payment

## EU-SILC - EU-Statistics on Income and Living Conditions

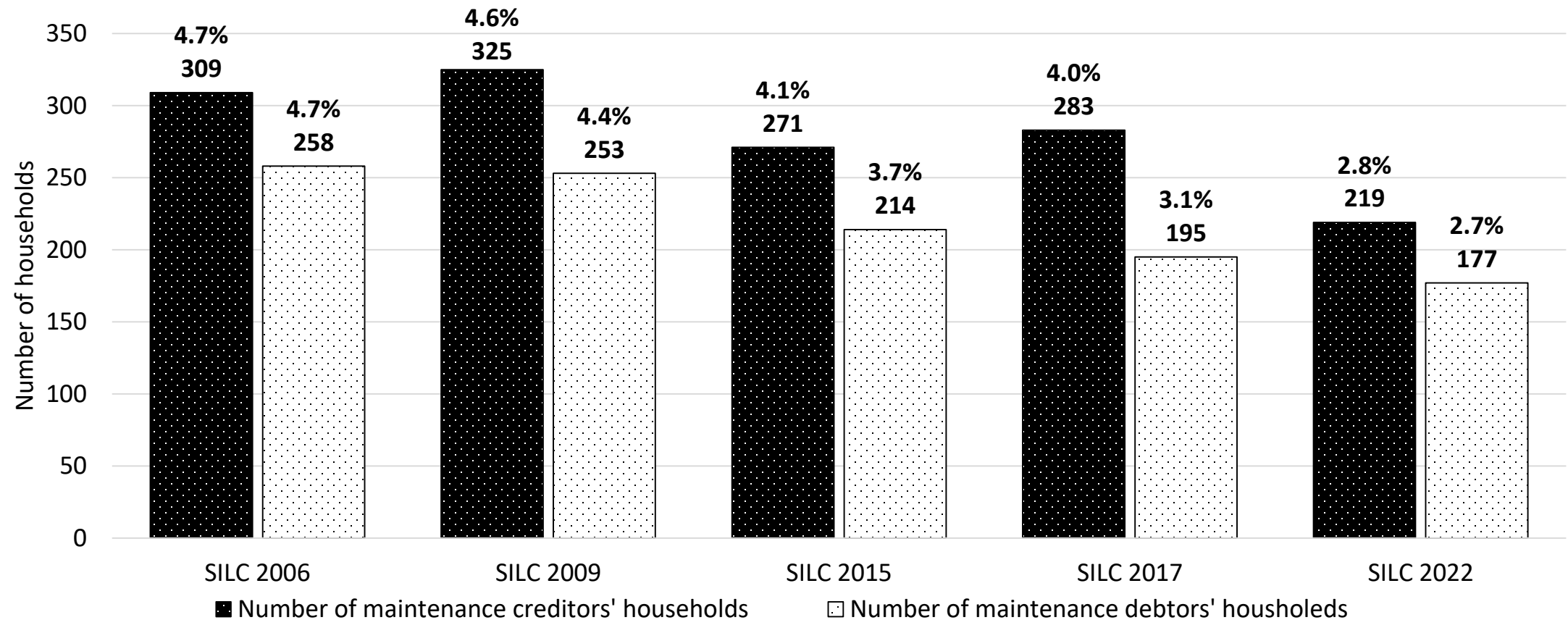
SILC 2022: 6 726 Belgian households

- **219** maintenance creditors' households
- **177** maintenance debtors' households

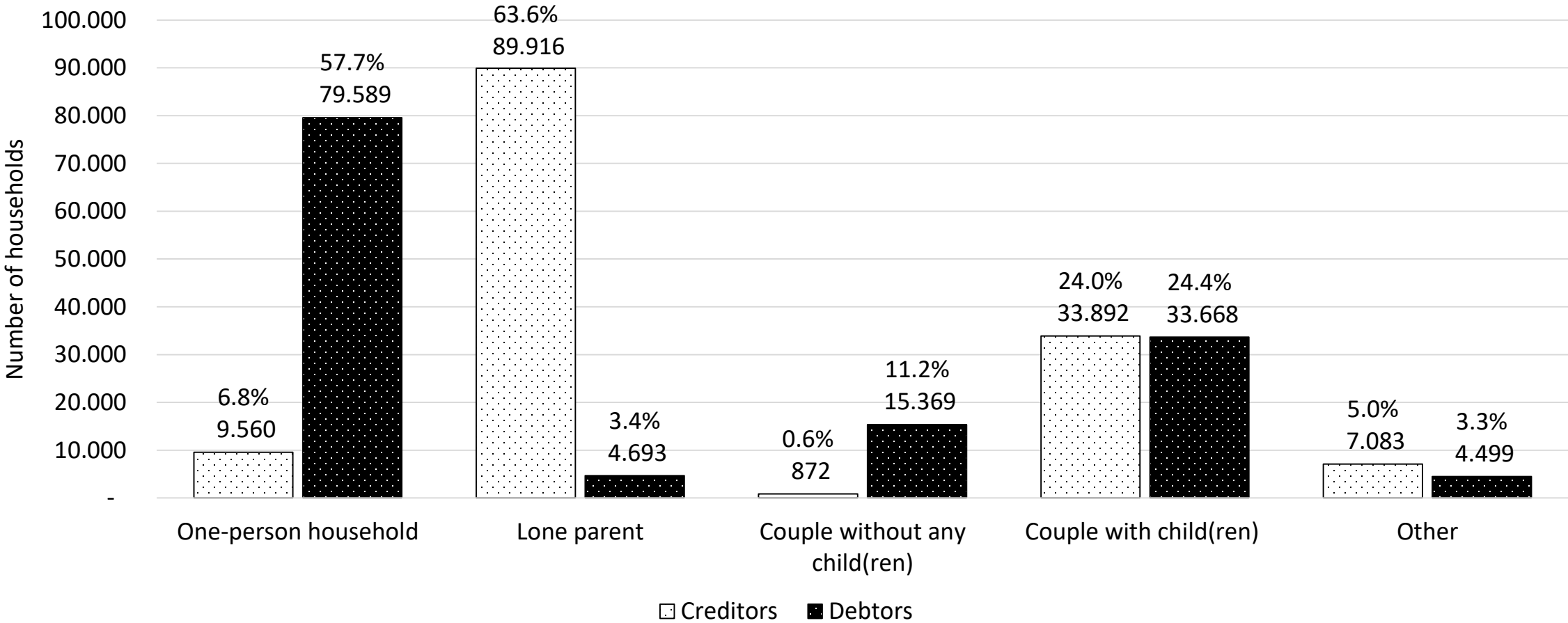
→Weighted

- 141 323 maintenance creditors' households or **2.8%** of Belgian households
- 137 816 maintenance debtors' households or **2.7%** of Belgian households

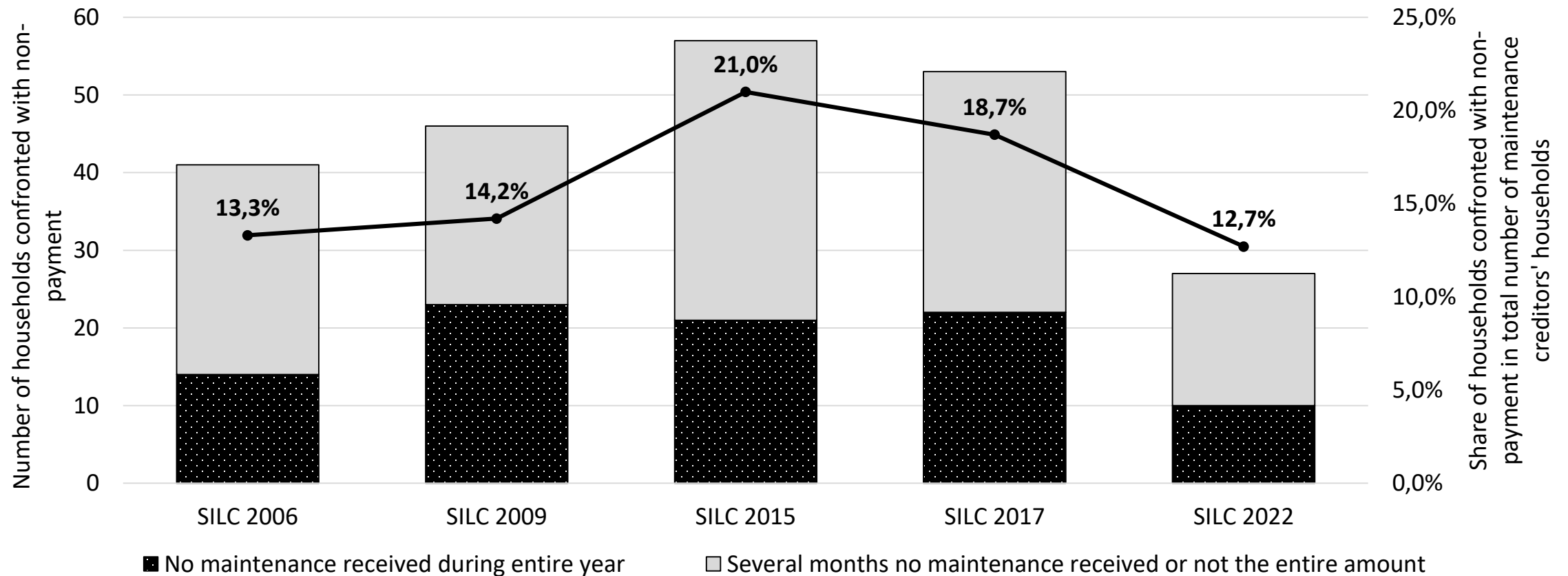
# Evolution maintenance creditors' households and debtors' households, SILC 2006, 2009, 2015, 2017, 2022



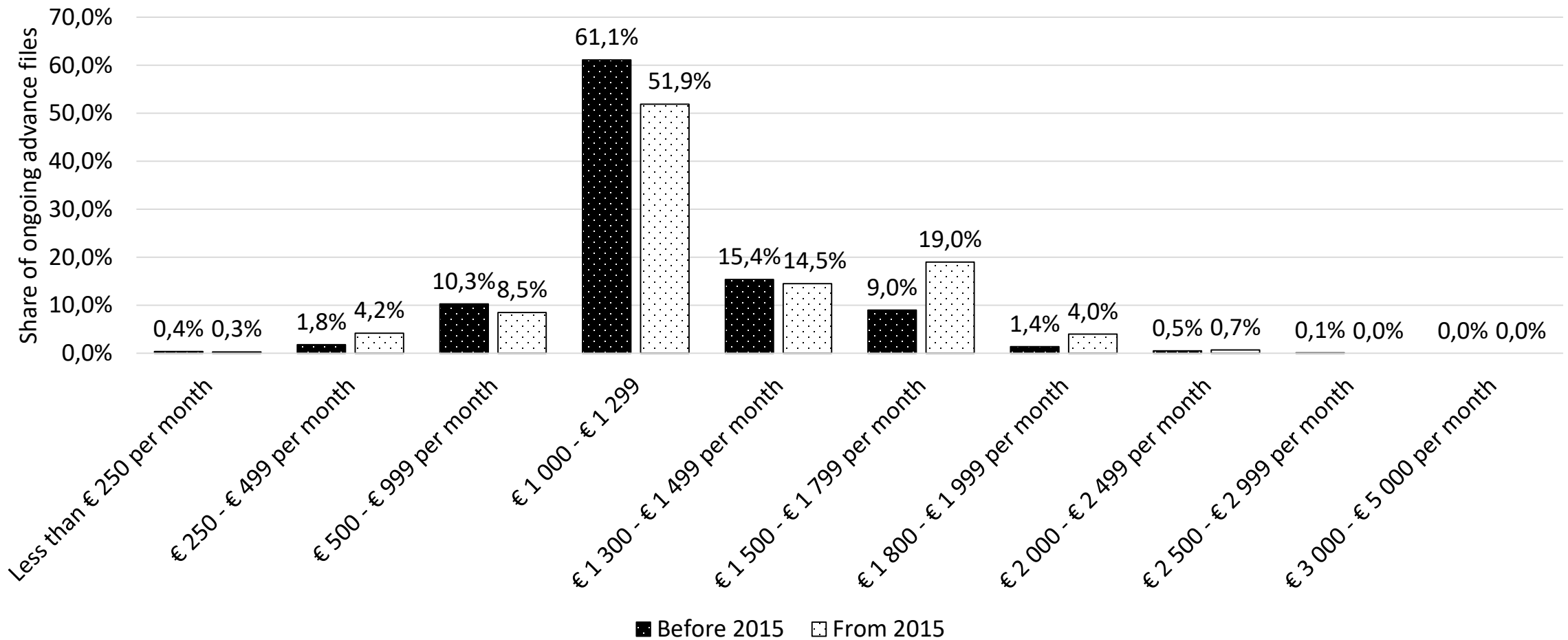
# Maintenance allowance creditors (N=141 323) and debtors (N=137 818) households by household type, SILC 2022



# Maintenance creditors' households confronted with **non-payment** and share in total number of maintenance creditors' households, SILC 2006, 2009, 2015, 2017, 2022



# Estimated income profile applicants ongoing advance files by periods 2004-2014 and 2015-2018 (indexed income 2018), July 2018



# Importance of maintenance in poverty reduction



# Lone parent households (not) entitled to maintenance, above and below poverty threshold, SILC 2022

	Entitled to maintenance (N=155)					Not entitled to maintenance (N=426)					Total (N=581)				
	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children or more	Total number of households	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children or more	Total number of households	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children or more	Total number of households
<b>Absolute numbers</b>															
Below poverty threshold	7 863	11 071	2 315	1 901	23 150	31 540	18 397	5 611	13 062	68 610	39 403	29 468	7 925	14 963	91 759
Above poverty threshold	41 746	17 072	6 290	1 659	66 766	97 742	49 319	20 313	9 588	176 963	139 488	66 391	26 603	11 247	243 729
<b>Total</b>	<b>49 608</b>	<b>28 143</b>	<b>8 605</b>	<b>3 560</b>	<b>89 916</b>	<b>129 283</b>	<b>67 716</b>	<b>25 923</b>	<b>22 650</b>	<b>245 573</b>	<b>178 891</b>	<b>95 859</b>	<b>34 528</b>	<b>26 210</b>	<b>335 489</b>
<b>Column percentages</b>															
Below poverty threshold	15.8%	39.3%	26.9%	53.4%	<b>25.7%</b>	24.4%	27.2%	21.6%	57.7%	<b>27.9%</b>	22.0%	30.7%	23.0%	57.1%	27.4%
Above poverty threshold	84.2%	60.7%	73.1%	46.6%	74.3%	75.6%	72.8%	78.4%	42.3%	72.1%	78.0%	69.3%	77.0%	42.9%	72.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Impact of the removal of maintenance</b>															
<b>Absolute numbers</b>															
Below poverty threshold	12 622	15 394	2 912	2 236	33 164										
Above poverty threshold	36 986	12 749	5 693	1 324	56 753										
<b>Total</b>	<b>49 608</b>	<b>28 143</b>	<b>8 605</b>	<b>3 560</b>	<b>89 916</b>										
<b>Column percentages</b>															
Below poverty threshold	25.4%	54.7%	33.8%	62.8%	<b>36.9%</b>										
Above poverty threshold	74.6%	45.3%	66.2%	37.2%	63.1%										
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>										



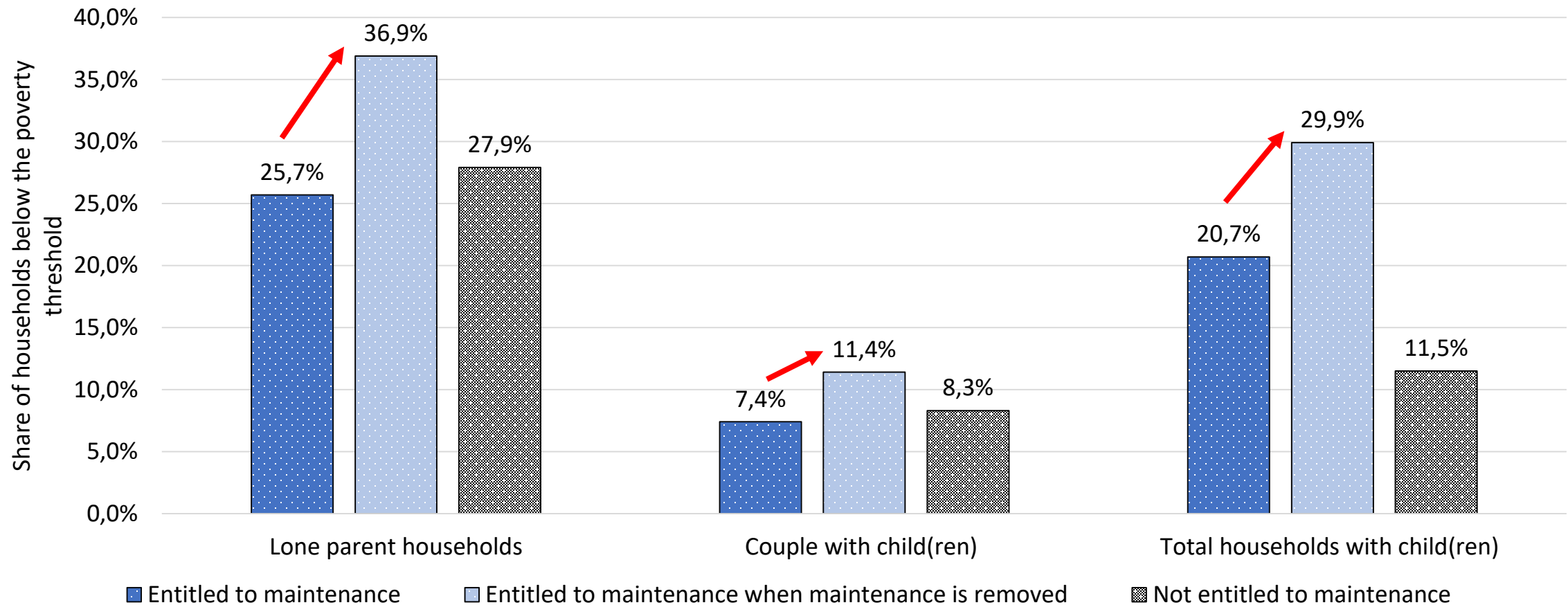
# Couples with child(ren) (not) entitled to maintenance, above and below poverty threshold, SILC 2022

	Entitled to maintenance (N=155)					Not entitled to maintenance (N=426)					Total (N=581)				
	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children or more	Total number of households	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children or more	Total number of households	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children or more	Total number of households
<b>Absolute numbers</b>															
Below poverty threshold	0	1 329	1 191	0	2 520	31 726	35 886	23 785	16 541	107 938	31 726	37 215	24 976	16 541	110 458
Above poverty threshold	8 274	9 882	9 539	3 677	31 372	415 580	522 963	192 795	53 583	1 184 921	423 854	532 845	202 334	57 260	1 216 293
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 274</b>	<b>11 211</b>	<b>10 730</b>	<b>3 677</b>	<b>33 892</b>	<b>447 306</b>	<b>558 849</b>	<b>216 580</b>	<b>70 123</b>	<b>1 292 859</b>	<b>455 580</b>	<b>570 060</b>	<b>227 310</b>	<b>73 801</b>	<b>1 326 751</b>
<b>Column percentages</b>															
Below poverty threshold	0.0%	11.9%	11.1%	0.0%	<b>7.4%</b>	7.1%	6.4%	11.0%	23.6%	<b>8.3%</b>	7.0%	6.5%	11.0%	22.4%	8.3%
Above poverty threshold	100.0%	88.1%	88.9%	100.0%	92.6%	92.9%	93.6%	89.0%	76.4%	91.7%	93.0%	93.5%	89.0%	77.6%	91.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Impact of the removal of maintenance</b>															
<b>Absolute numbers</b>															
Below poverty threshold	0	1 329	1 656	885	3 869										
Above poverty threshold	8 274	9 882	9 075	2 793	30 023										
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 274</b>	<b>11 211</b>	<b>10 730</b>	<b>3 677</b>	<b>33 892</b>										
<b>Column percentages</b>															
Below poverty threshold	0.0%	11.9%	15.4%	24.1%	<b>11.4%</b>										
Above poverty threshold	100.0%	88.1%	84.6%	75.9%	88.6%										
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>										

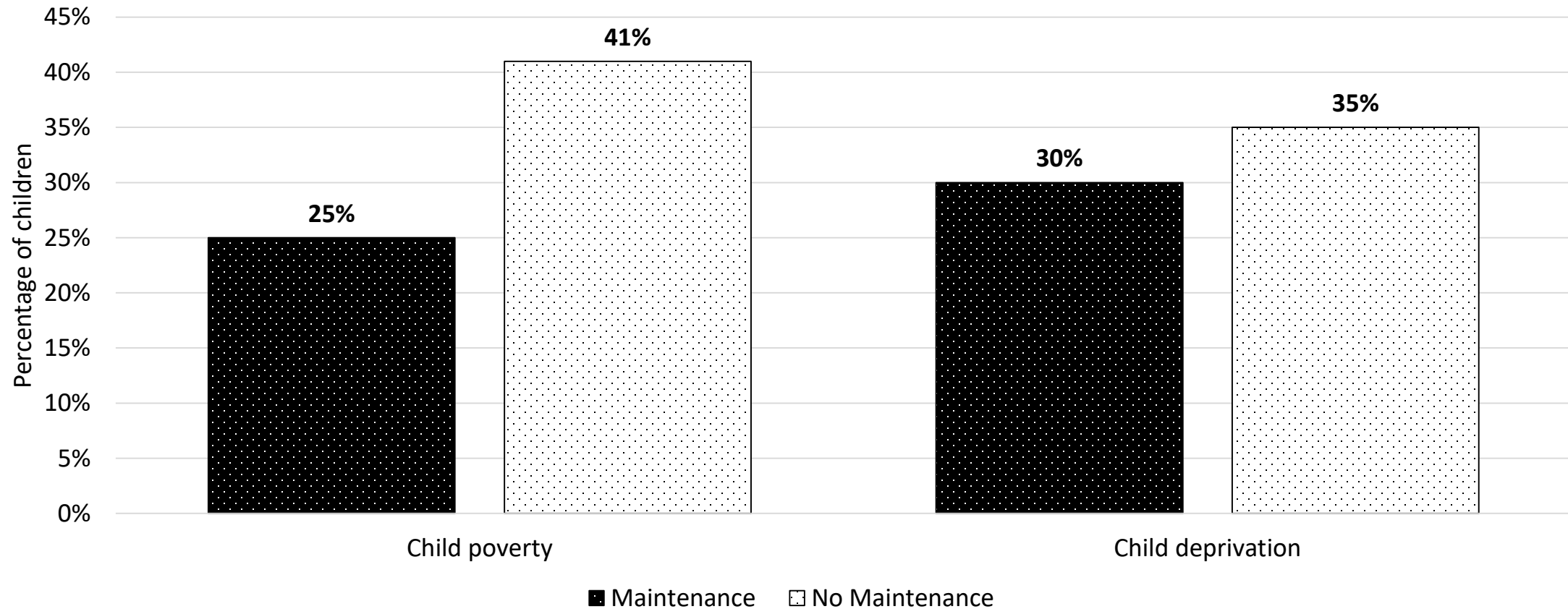
# Total number of households with child(ren) (not) entitled to maintenance, above and below poverty threshold, SILC 2022

	Entitled to maintenance (N=155)					Not entitled to maintenance (N=426)					Total (N=581)				
	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children or more	Total number of households	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children or more	Total number of households	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children or more	Total number of households
<b>Absolute numbers</b>															
Below poverty threshold	7 863	12 400	3 506	1 901	25 670	63 267	54 283	29 396	29 603	176 548	71 129	66 683	32 902	31 504	202 218
Above poverty threshold	50 020	26 954	15 829	5 336	98 139	513 322	572 283	213 108	63 171	1 361 884	563 342	599 237	228 937	68 507	1 460 023
<b>Total</b>	<b>57 882</b>	<b>39 354</b>	<b>19 335</b>	<b>7 237</b>	<b>123 808</b>	<b>576 589</b>	<b>626 566</b>	<b>242 504</b>	<b>92 774</b>	<b>1 538 432</b>	<b>634 471</b>	<b>665 919</b>	<b>261 839</b>	<b>100 011</b>	<b>1 662 240</b>
<b>Column percentages</b>															
Below poverty threshold	13.6%	31.5%	18.1%	26.3%	<b>20.7%</b>	11.0%	8.7%	12.1%	31.9%	<b>11.5%</b>	11.2%	10.0%	12.6%	31.5%	12.2%
Above poverty threshold	86.4%	68.5%	81.9%	73.7%	79.3%	89.0%	91.3%	87.9%	68.1%	88.5%	88.8%	90.0%	87.4%	68.5%	87.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Impact of the removal of maintenance</b>															
<b>Absolute numbers</b>															
Below poverty threshold	12 622	16 722	4 568	3 120	37 032										
Above poverty threshold	45 260	22 631	14 767	4 117	86 776										
<b>Total</b>	<b>57 882</b>	<b>39 354</b>	<b>19 335</b>	<b>7 237</b>	<b>123 808</b>										
<b>Column percentages</b>															
Below poverty threshold	21.8%	42.5%	23.6%	43.1%	<b>29.9%</b>										
Above poverty threshold	78.2%	57.5%	76.4%	56.9%	70.1%										
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>										

# Share of households with child(ren) below the poverty threshold

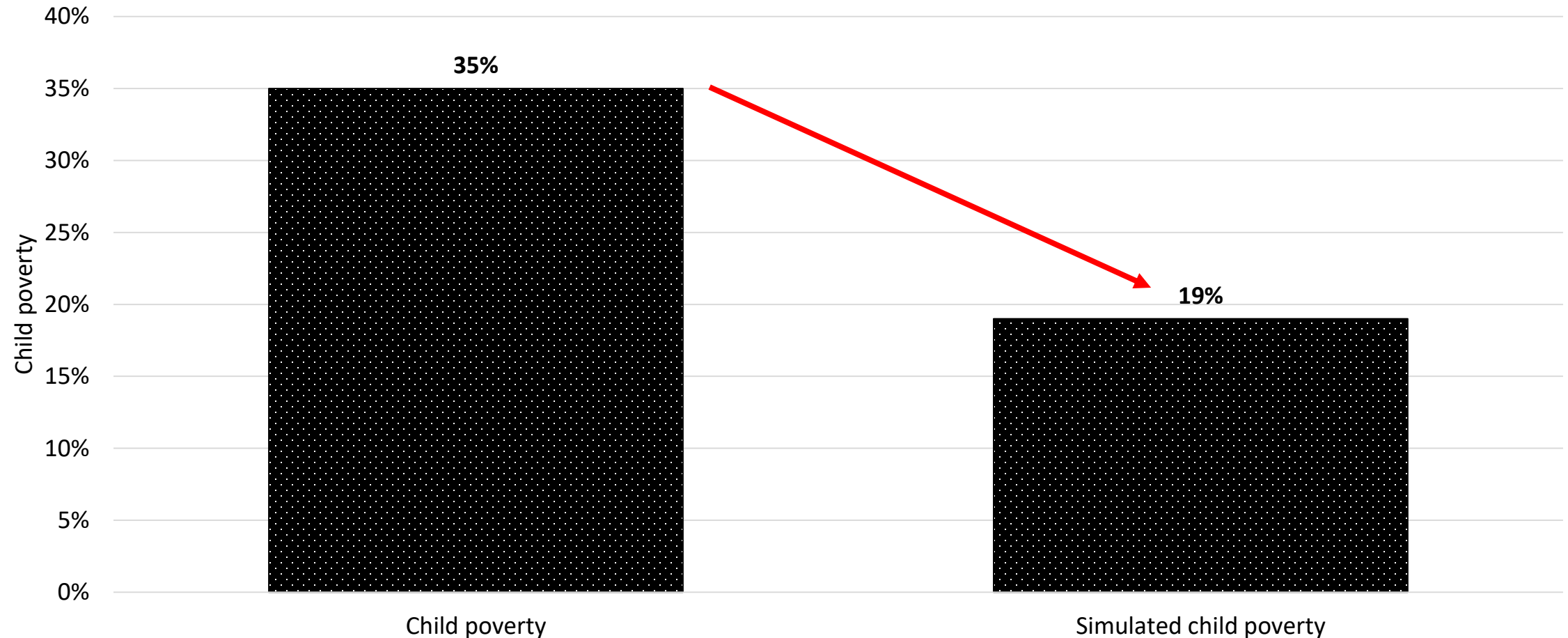


# Child poverty and child deprivation according to receipt of maintenance payments by mothers with whom the children reside primarily, Belgium, 2021



\*Child poverty concerns children aged 0 to 17. Child deprivation concerns children aged 0 to 15

# Simulated effect on child poverty of a guaranteed child support payment, mothers with whom children reside primarily, Belgium, 2021



## Number of children with lone parent households (not) entitled to maintenance, above and below poverty threshold, SILC 2022, and total number of children with separated parents

	Entitled to maintenance (N=155)					Not entitled to maintenance (N=426)					Total (N=581)					
	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children or more	Total number of households	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children or more	Total number of households	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children or more	Total number of households	
Absolute numbers																
Below poverty threshold	7 863	11 071	2 315	1 901	23 150	31 540	18 397	5 611	13 062	68 610	39 403	29 468	7 925	14 963	91 759	
Above poverty threshold	41 746	17 072	6 290	1 659	66 766	97 742	49 319	20 313	9 588	176 963	139 488	66 391	26 603	11 247	243 729	
Total of families	49 608	28 143	8 605	3 560	89 916	129 283	67 716	25 923	22 650	245 573	178 891	95 859	34 528	26 210	335 489	
<b>Number of children</b>	<b>49 608</b>	<b>56 286</b>	<b>25 815</b>	<b>14 240</b>	<b>145 949</b>	<b>129 283</b>	<b>135 432</b>	<b>77 769</b>	<b>90 600</b>	<b>433 084</b>	<b>178 891</b>	<b>191 718</b>	<b>103 584</b>	<b>104 840</b>	<b>579 033</b>	
<b>Number of children with divorced parents (Guio and Van Lancker (2023))</b>								<b>544 000</b>								
<b>Living most of the time with mother</b>								<b>337 000</b>								
<b>Living most of the time with father</b>								<b>73 000</b>								
<b>Children in situations of co-parenting</b>								<b>134 000</b>								

# Problems solved and to be solved



# Past and future of SECAL

From income tested to universal system of advance payments

Shortcomings remain

- Total group of eligible creditors?
- Non-take-up
  - Ignorance
  - Barriers: high administrative and financial requirements, limited digital and language skills, practical obstacles
  - Deliberate non-take-up → Cases of conflict and intra-family violence



# Past and future of SECAL

## Several proposals

- Increase maximum advance amount from € 175 per month per child to € 350
- Apply advance system to maintenance between ex-partners as well: the poverty risk of singles (without children) entitled to maintenance is 43,6%

## Feasibility of universal and automatic system

- Financial Intermediary (cfr. Québec)
- Mediator (cfr. Aripa in France)

→ Possible improvements for stakeholders: accessibility, conflict situation and poverty reduction

# A tryptich or trilogy of studies on the past and potential future of DAVO in Belgium



[https://financien.belgium.be/sites/default/files/downloads/HIVA\\_budgettaire\\_impact\\_toekenning\\_voorschotten\\_DAVO\\_201211%20\(1\).pdf](https://financien.belgium.be/sites/default/files/downloads/HIVA_budgettaire_impact_toekenning_voorschotten_DAVO_201211%20(1).pdf)



[https://financien.belgium.be/sites/default/files/Statistieken\\_SD/Andere\\_publicaties/HIVA\\_actualisering%20budgettaire\\_impact\\_toekenning\\_voorschotten\\_DAVO\\_2020.pdf](https://financien.belgium.be/sites/default/files/Statistieken_SD/Andere_publicaties/HIVA_actualisering%20budgettaire_impact_toekenning_voorschotten_DAVO_2020.pdf)



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For the complete analysis, see:

Claessens, E., De Smedt, L., Mortelmans, D., Pacolet, J., Swennen, F., Van den Sande, J., & Vielfont, H. (2024). *Haalbaarheidsstudie betreffende een universeel en automatisch alimentatiestelsel, Étude de faisabilité d'un fonds universel et automatique pour les pensions alimentaires*  
Brussels, The Institute for the Equality of Women and Men,