

Families and Households, 2014



Coverage: **UK**

Date: **28 January 2015**

Geographical Area: **Other**

Theme: **People and Places**

Theme: **Population**

Key findings

- In 2014 there were 18.6 million families in the UK. Of these, 12.5 million were married couple families. This is the most common family type in the UK.
- Cohabiting couple families grew by 29.7% between 2004 and 2014. This is the fastest growing type of family in the UK.
- In 2014 there were 2.0 million lone parents with dependent children in the UK. Women accounted for 91% of lone parents with dependent children.
- There were 26.7 million households in the UK in 2014. 28% of these contained only one person.
- Households containing two or more families were the fastest growing household type in the decade to 2014, increasing by 56% to 313,000 households.

Introduction

This bulletin presents annual statistics on the number of families by type, people in families by type and children in families by type. A family is a married, civil partnered or cohabiting couple with or without children, or a lone parent with at least one child who live at the same address. Children may be dependent or non-dependent. Types of family include married couple families, cohabiting couple families and lone parent families.

The bulletin also presents statistics for 1996 to 2014 on the number of households by type, household size and people living alone. A household is one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room, sitting room or dining area. A household can consist of more than one family, or no families in the case of a group of unrelated people.

The statistics for 2014 are published for the first time today. The statistics published today for the years 2002 to 2013 have been revised due to the [reweighting of the Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#) following the 2011 Census. The earliest year for which these data are available on a consistent basis is 1996.

The Labour Force Survey, a large household survey of people in the UK, is used to provide estimates about UK families and households presented in this bulletin. The statistics are based on responses to the survey in the April to June quarter each year. Because the estimates are based on a survey, all estimates produced are subject to sampling variability. The majority of estimates are precise but for some smaller groups, such as civil partner couple families and same sex cohabiting couple families, the estimates are considered less precise and should be treated with more caution. Where estimates are compared, sometimes they will be described as 'statistically significant'. This means that statistical tests have shown that a difference is likely to reflect a real change in the population rather than occurring by chance due to variation in the samples.

The statistics are used by those who want to improve their understanding of the UK's families and households including:

- Policy makers
- MPs
- Journalists
- Charities
- Businesses
- Students
- Researchers and academics
- Members of the general public.

Further information about people who use statistics on families and households and what they use the statistics for can be found in the information note [Families and households statistics: User experience](#).

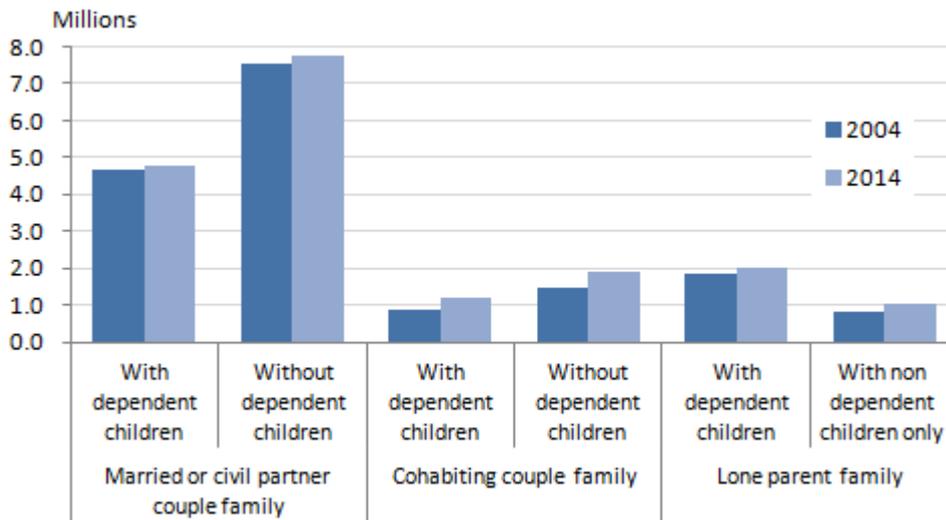
Note about marriage of same sex couples

The Marriages (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 made provision for the marriage of same sex couples in England and Wales from 29th March 2014 onwards. No married same sex couples were selected in the interview sample in the April to June 2014 quarter of the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Therefore statistics on same sex married couples, their families and their households will not be reported on within this bulletin. Early analysis of the July to September 2014 quarter shows that some married same sex couples were interviewed on the LFS. We anticipate that the next Families and Households release will contain statistics on same sex married couples. The latest statistics on marriages formed by same sex couples can be found [here](#).

Families

Figure 1: Families by family type, 2004 and 2014

United Kingdom



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Families without dependent children have only non-dependent children or no children in the household.
2. Cohabiting couples include both opposite and same sex couples.

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Figure 1 shows that the most common family type in the UK in 2014 was a married or civil partner couple family **without** dependent children. There were 7.8 million such families in 2014. The next most common family type was a married or civil partner couple family **with** dependent children, of which there were 4.8 million in 2014.

All family types have increased in number since 2004 but the fastest growing family type in the UK over the decade 2004 to 2014 was the cohabiting couple family (including both with and without dependent children). The number of cohabiting couple families grew by 29.7% between 2004 and 2014. This compares to a growth of 11.9% for lone parent families and 2.2% growth for married couple families. Despite an increase in all three types of family over the last decade, married couple families are still the most common family type in the UK, both with and without dependent children.

Table 1: Families: by family type in 2004 and 2014

Thousands

Family type	2004		2014			
	With dependent children	Without dependent children ¹	Total families	With dependent children	Without dependent children ¹	Total families
Married couple family	4,689	7,521	12,210	4,751	7,725	12,476
Civil partner couple family ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	12	49	61
Opposite sex cohabiting couple family	885	1,412	2,298	1,163	1,812	2,975
Same sex cohabiting couple family	..	60	61	9	75	84
Lone parent family	1,869	817	2,685	1,981	1,024	3,005
All families	7,444	9,811	17,254	7,916	10,684	18,601

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Table notes:

1. Families without dependent children have only non-dependent children or no children in the household.
2. Civil partnerships were introduced in the UK in December 2005.
3. .. Indicates that estimates are not sufficiently reliable to be published.
4. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

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Table 1 shows that the total number of families in the UK has increased from 17.3 million in 2004 to 18.6 million in 2014. This is a rise of 8%, similar to the growth in the UK population during this period.

The number of married couple families increased by 266,000 between 2004 and 2014, to 12.5 million in 2014. This rise is statistically significant. The increase in married couple families has been driven mainly by a rise in the number of married couples without dependent children in the household. This is due to increases in both:

- married couples whose children have left home. This is due to the ageing of the married population.

- married couples with only non-dependent (adult) children in the household. This could be associated with young adults either delaying leaving the parental home or returning to it. [Statistics published in 2014](#) show that there was a 25% increase in the number of 20 to 34 year olds living with their parents between 1996 and 2013.

The increase in opposite sex cohabiting couple families between 2004 and 2014 is also statistically significant, rising from 2.3 million to 3.0 million. In 2014 there were an estimated 84,000 families consisting of a same sex cohabiting couple and 61,000 consisting of a civil partnered couple, the latter having steadily increased since the introduction of civil partnerships in the UK in December 2005.

Table 1 also shows that 38% of married couple families had dependent children living in the household compared with 39% of opposite sex cohabiting couple families in 2014. However these similar percentages mask differences between these two groups. Overall married women of childbearing age are more likely to give birth than cohabiting women¹. However, married women tend to be older on average than their cohabiting counterparts so children may be older and have left home. Cohabiting couples are more likely to be younger and of childbearing age. These two competing factors of age and likelihood of childbearing mean that a very similar percentage of married couples and opposite sex cohabiting couples have dependent children living in the household.

A much lower percentage of civil partner couple families and same sex cohabiting couple families (19% and 11% respectively) had dependent children in 2014 than married and opposite sex cohabiting couples.

Notes for Families

1. [Fertility and partnership](#) status in the last two decades

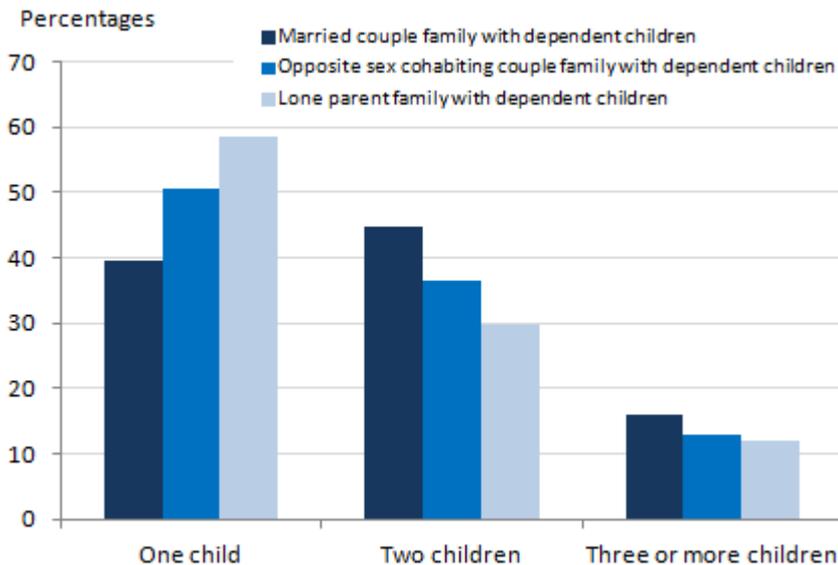
Lone parents

There were nearly 2.0 million lone parents with dependent children in the UK in 2014, a figure which has grown from 1.9 million in 2004. This increase is statistically significant. Lone parents with dependent children represented 25% of all families with dependent children in 2014, similar to 2004.

In 2014, women accounted for 91% of lone parents with dependent children and men the remaining 9%. These percentages have changed little over the previous decade. Women are more likely to take the main caring responsibilities for any children when relationships break down, and therefore become lone parents.

Figure 2: Families with dependent children by family type and number of dependent children, 2014

United Kingdom



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Less than 1% of dependent children lived in civil partner or same sex cohabiting couple families in 2014. Therefore the percentages are too small to be shown.

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Figure 2 shows that 58% of lone parents with dependent children have only one child, higher than both other family types. Further, only 12% of lone parents have three or more children. Conversely, married couples with dependent children have more children on average than other family types, and only 39% have only one dependent child. These patterns are likely to reflect the stability of parental partnerships, as well as the fact that people often marry after having a child and then have further children in marriage.

In 2014, 1.0 million lone parents had only non-dependent children (sometimes called adult children). This is a statistically significant increase from 817,000 in 2004. Fathers accounted for 22% of lone parents with non-dependent children, compared with 9% of lone parents with dependent children. Further information about young adults living with their parents can be found on the [ONS website](#).

Notes for Lone parents

1. Fertility and partnership status in the last two decades” at www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/population-trends-rd/population-trends/no--140--summer-2010/index.html

Cohabiting couples

There were nearly 3.0 million opposite sex cohabiting couple families and 84,000 same sex cohabiting couple families in the UK in 2014. Together cohabiting couple families account for 16.4% of all families in the UK.

Cohabiting couple families are the fastest growing family type in the UK. Although there is no such thing as common law marriage in UK law, 51% of respondents to the British Social Attitudes Survey in 2008 thought that unmarried couples who live together for some time probably or definitely had a 'common law marriage' which gives them the same legal rights as married couples, although this is not legally the case. [The cohabitation rights bill](#) which addresses the rights of cohabiting couples is in the early stages of passing through parliament.

For opposite sex cohabiting couple families there has been a statistically significant increase from 13% of all families in 2004 to 16% in 2014. Same sex cohabiting couple families as a percentage of all families also increased over the same time period but this was not a statistically significant change (0.4% to 0.5%).

Table 2: Cohabiting couple families in 2014

Family type	Number of families (Thousands)	Percentage (%)
Opposite sex cohabiting couple family	2,975	
Dependent children	1,163	39
No children	1,666	56
Non-dependent children only	146	5
Same sex cohabiting couple family	84	
Dependent children	9	11
No children or non-dependent children only	75	89

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Table notes:

1. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

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In 2014, Table 2 shows that 39% of all opposite sex cohabiting couple families had dependent children in the household, in contrast to only 11% of same sex cohabiting couple families.

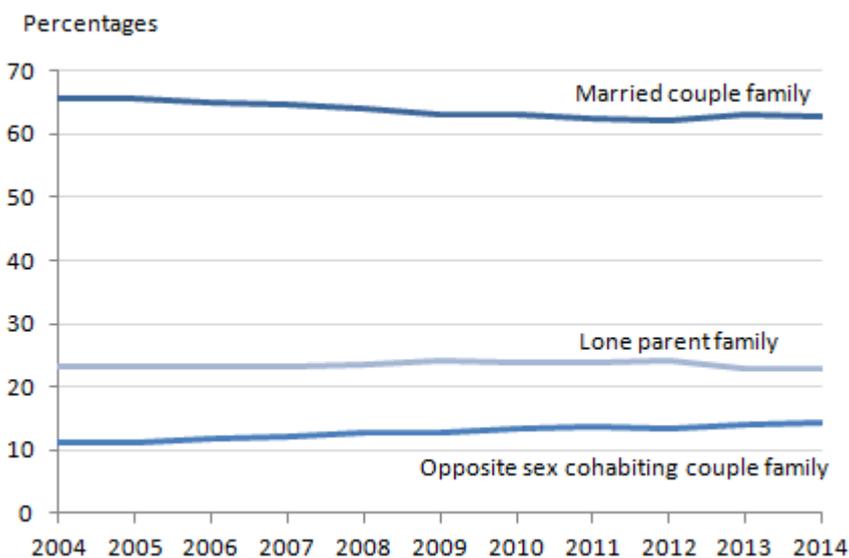
The largest group of opposite sex cohabiting couple families are those with no children in the household (56%). This could be associated with young couples choosing to cohabit before getting married and starting a family. However, some young cohabiting couples may choose to have a child before getting married; this is demonstrated in the age at first marriage being higher ([30.3 years \(586.5 Kb Excel sheet\)](#)) than the average age of women at the birth of their first child ([28.3 years](#)).

Dependent children

Dependent children are those living with their parent(s) and either (a) aged under 16, or (b) aged 16 to 18 in full-time education, excluding children aged 16 to 18 who have a spouse, partner or child living in the household. There were 13.8 million dependent children living in families in the UK in 2014, around 560,000 more than a decade earlier. This increase in dependent children is associated with the higher number of [births](#) in the most recent decade (2004 to 2014) compared with the previous decade.

The types of families in which dependent children live have changed significantly. Figure 3 shows that the biggest change is for dependent children living in opposite sex cohabiting couple families. In 2004 11% of dependent children lived in such families, and this rose to 14% by 2014. Over the same period, the percentage of dependent children living in a married couple family fell by three percentage points to 63% in 2014. The percentage of dependent children living in lone parent families changed little over the decade; 23% lived in lone parent families in 2014.

Figure 3: Percentage of dependent children: by family type, 2004 to 2014



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Less than 1% of dependent children lived in civil partner or same sex cohabiting couple families in 2014. Therefore the percentages are too small to be shown.

Download chart

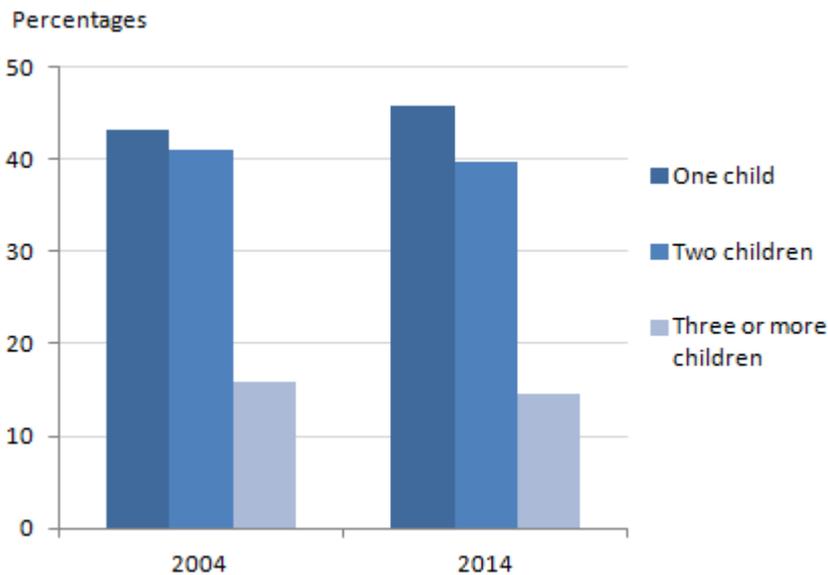
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Figure 4 shows that in 2014, 46% of families with dependent children had only one dependent child in the family at the time of the survey, a significant increase of three percentage points since 2004. In 2014, 40% of families with dependent children had two dependent children and 14% had three or more dependent children. The statistics do not necessarily indicate that the proportion of only children is increasing. This is partly because some families may have one dependent child, but also other non-dependent (adult) children in the household. Further, women have been postponing their childbearing to older ages in recent years; this could be temporarily increasing the proportion of families who have had a first child but not yet had their second. Further information about family size can be found in the [Family Size publication](#) and on the number of children women are having in the latest [childbearing release](#).

Figure 4: Percentage of families with dependent children: by number of dependent children in the family, 2004 and 2014

United Kingdom



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

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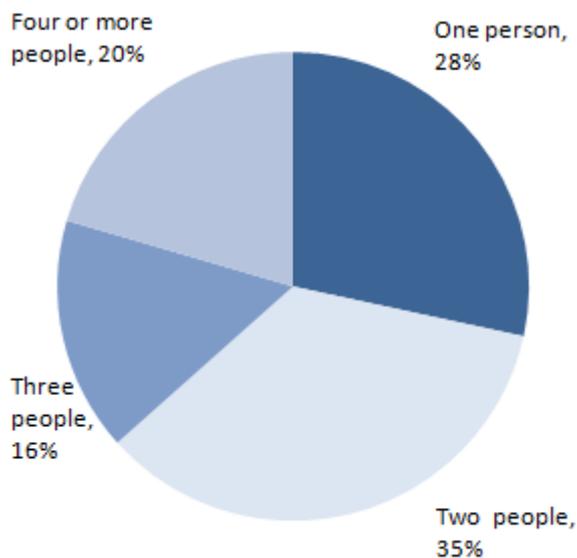
Household size

A household is defined as one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room, sitting room or dining area. A household can consist of more than one family, or no families in the case of a group of unrelated people.

There were 26.7 million households in the UK in 2014. Household size in 2014 is shown in Figure 5. The number of households has increased by 7% since 2004, similar to the growth in the UK population during this period. As a result average household sizes have changed little over the decade: 20% of households contained four or more people in 2014, very similar to in 2004. In 2014 28% of households contained one person. Although this hasn't changed greatly over the last decade, a different source, the General Lifestyle Survey¹, which provides a longer time series, shows that 17% of households in Great Britain contained one person in 1971. Although not directly comparable, this is 11 percentage points lower than the Labour Force Survey shows for the UK in 2014, suggesting that the proportion of one person households has increased considerably since the early 1970s.

Figure 5: Percentage of households by household size in 2014

United Kingdom



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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(24 Kb)

Of the 7.6 million one person households in the UK in 2014, 54% of them contained one woman and 46% of them contained one man.

The percentage of UK households which contain one person (28%) is similar to the European average² of 32%. In 2014, the average number of people per household was 2.4, the same as the European average. According to the 2011 Census³, Northern Ireland had the highest average number of people per household of the UK constituent countries at 2.6 and Scotland had the lowest at 2.2.

Notes for Household size

1. [General Lifestyle Survey](#)
2. The EU Statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) is the source of the European comparisons. The statistics are for 2013 and come from table ilc_lvph03 which can be found [on the Eurostat web page Income and Living Conditions](#). The countries covered are the EU27 countries.
3. 2011 Census statistics at www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/uk-census/index.html

Household type

Table 3: Households: by household type in 2004 and 2014

	Millions					
Year	One person households	One family household: couple	One family household: lone parent	Two or more unrelated adults	Multi-family households	All households
2004	7.2	14.3	2.6	0.7	0.2	25.0
2014	7.6	15.1	2.8	0.9	0.3	26.7

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Download table

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Table 3 shows that the most common household type in 2014 was one family consisting of a couple with or without children. There were 15.1 million such households, an increase from 14.3 million in 2004. Despite this increase in absolute numbers, there has been no change in the proportion of all households of this type, remaining at 57% of all households in 2014.

The next most common household type was one person households, of which there were 7.6 million in 2014. UK households containing one lone parent family increased from 2.6 million in 2004 to 2.8 million a decade later. Although international comparisons are not straightforward due to definitional differences, the proportion of households in the UK which consist of a lone parent with dependent

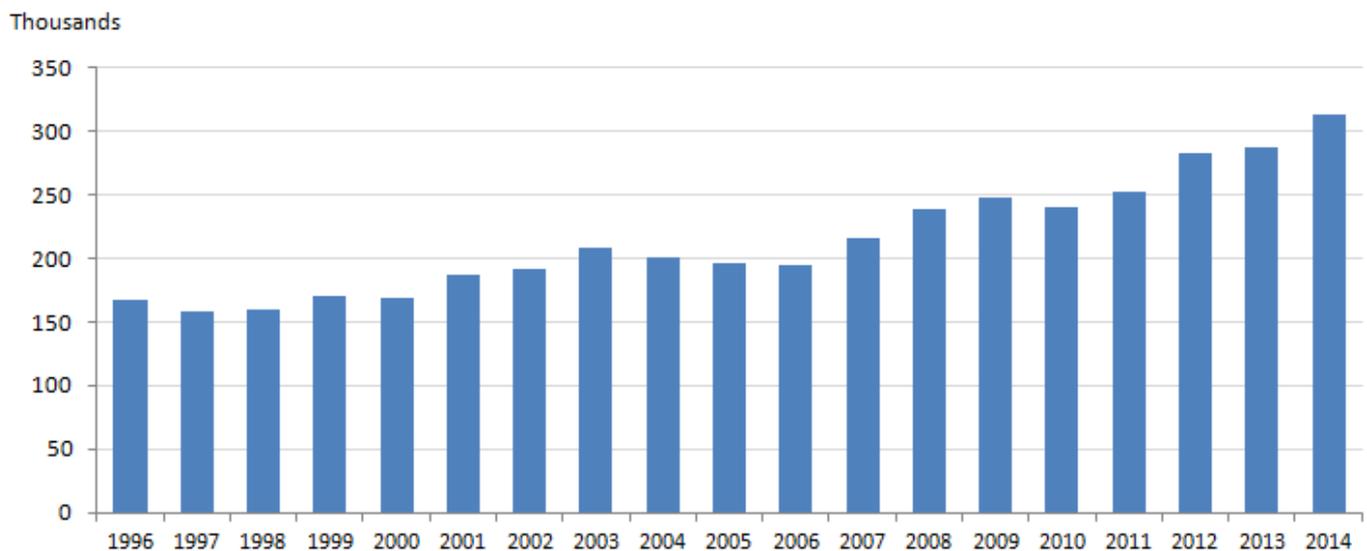
children is much higher than the European average¹; only two countries (Iceland and Norway) have a higher proportion.

Households containing two or more families were the fastest growing household type, increasing by 56% from 201,000 households in 2004 to 313,000 households in 2014. This increase is statistically significant. Despite this rise, multi-family households still only represented a very small proportion (1%) of all households in 2014. Families in these households may be unrelated, or may be related in some way, for example a married couple with their son and his girlfriend.

Figure 6 shows that growth in multi-family households was observed between 1996 and 2014, but particularly since 2006 with larger estimates in 2012, 2013 and 2014. However the increase observed between 2013 and 2014 is not statistically significant.

Figure 6: Multi-family households, 1996 to 2014

United Kingdom



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

Download chart

XLS [XLS format](#)
(24.5 Kb)

Notes for Household type

1. The EU Statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) is the source of the European comparisons. The statistics are for 2013 and come from table `ilc_lvph04` which can be found [on the Eurostat web page Income and Living Conditions](#). The countries covered are the EU27 countries.

Living alone

In 2014, 7.6 million people in UK households lived alone, of which 4.1 million were aged 16 to 64. Of those in this age group, the majority (58%) were male. Possible reasons for more men living alone at this age include; higher proportions of men than women never marrying, men marrying at older ages than women and marrying women younger than themselves, and partnership dissolution leading to men living alone while women live with any children from the relationship. Further studies by academics looking at living arrangements in mid-life can be found [here](#).

For those aged 65 to 74, and 75 and over, the pattern is reversed; at these ages the majority of people living alone were female (62% and 73% respectively). This is partly because there are more women than men in the total population aged 65 or over due to women's higher life expectancy. By the age of 65 most women have been married¹, and husbands are typically older than their wives. These two factors accentuate the gap in life expectancy between husbands and wives, and mean that more women than men become widowed, which may lead to living alone. In spite of this, the number of widowed women is falling due to life expectancy increasing faster for men compared to [women](#).

Figure 7 shows the trends in the number of people living alone by age group between 2004 and 2014. The largest change is in the 45 to 64 age group, where the number of people living alone increased by 27% between 2004 and 2014, a statistically significant change. This is partly due to the increasing population aged 45 to 64 in the UK over this period, as the 1960s baby boom generation have been reaching this age group. The increase could also be due to a rise in the divorced population and a fall in the married population in the 45 to 64 age group.

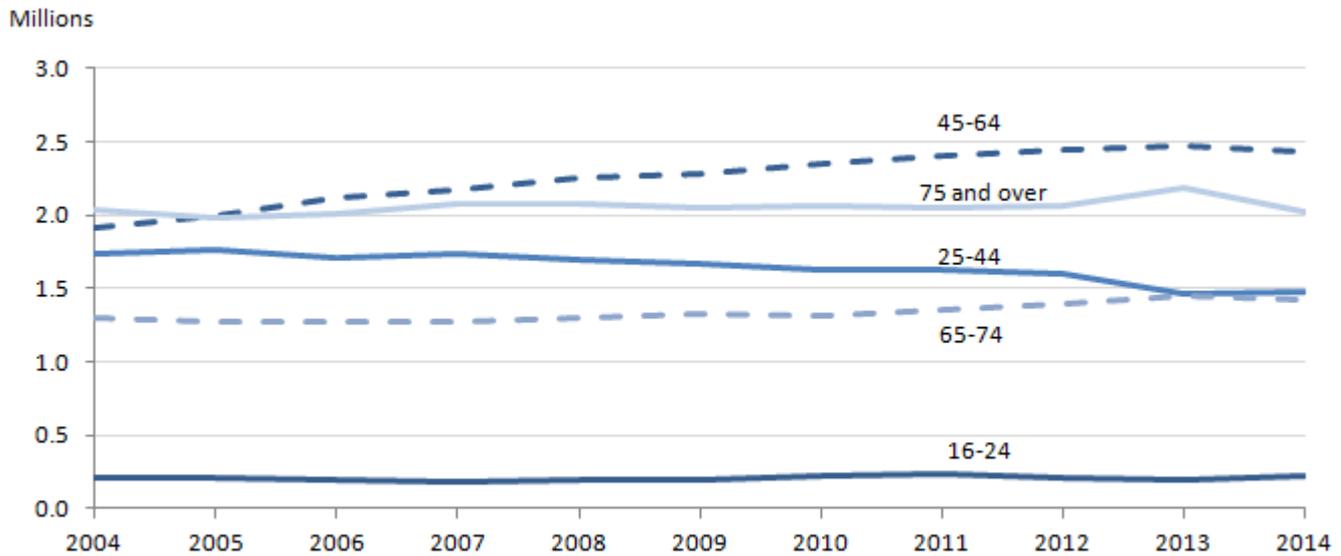
In contrast, the number living alone in the 25 to 44 age group fell by 15% between 2004 and 2014. Previous research has shown that the proportion of those aged 20 to 34 living with their parents has increased over the past decade². Affordability of moving out of the parental home has been cited as a possible factor in this increase. In addition, academic research³ has illustrated that there has been a shift towards sharing with others outside a family among young adults.

The number living alone in the 16 to 24 age group increased by 6% and those aged 65 to 74 living alone also saw an increase of 10% over the decade. In contrast the number living alone aged 75 and over decreased by 1% between 2004 and 2014. The decrease for those aged 75 and over between 2013 and 2014 is not statistically significant.

Further analysis of those living alone based on 2011 Census data, including looking at their ethnicity and tenure, can be found [here](#).

Figure 7: People living alone: by age group, 2004 to 2014

United Kingdom



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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Notes for Living alone

1. Statistics showing the proportion of men and women ever married by certain ages are available on the [ONS website](#).
2. [Young adults living with parents publication](#)
3. [The changing determinants of UK young adults' living arrangements](#)

Impact of the reweighting of the Labour Force Survey (LFS)

Following the 2011 Census, population estimates for the UK were revised back to 2002. The revisions made to the population estimates have now been incorporated into the weighting for the Labour Force Survey datasets. The estimates of families and households between 2002 and 2013 have now been revised following this reweighting.

A [summary table \(74.5 Kb Excel sheet\)](#) showing some of the changes made to estimates for the years 2002, 2007 and 2013 has been released today.

In general the reweighting has caused the estimates of families and households to increase because the [population on Census day 2011 was higher than the mid-year population estimate](#) for 2011 rolled forward from 2001. The changes that are seen become larger in more recent years i.e. further from the 2001 Census. The largest changes following the reweighting are discussed below.

Overall the total number of families is 0.8% higher in 2013 following the reweighting of the LFS. The data show that the total number of lone parent families is bigger than previously estimated; for 2013 it was 2.4% higher following the reweighting of the LFS. This feeds into in the overall number of families with dependent children for 2013 being 2.1% higher. The total number of families with non-dependent children only is 1% lower for 2013.

The number of lone parent families, particularly female lone parent families with dependent children, is higher due to a larger increase in the female than male population estimates following the 2011 Census.

Reweighting of the LFS has also had an impact at the household level. Overall the number of households is 0.9% higher in 2013. The estimated number of one person households containing a person aged 65 and over in 2013 is 1.9% higher. The higher number of lone parent families has in turn made the number of lone parent households in 2013 higher by 2.3%.

Further information

1. [Data tables \(439.5 Kb Excel sheet\)](#) about families and households were published on 28 January 2015.
2. Also available on the ONS website are:
 - a [Quality and Methodology Information Report](#) on these statistics
 - [information about people who use statistics \(47.8 Kb Pdf\)](#) on families and households and what they use the statistics for.
3. Further information about the Labour Force Survey can be found in the [Labour Force Survey user guidance](#).
4. Further statistics on [marriages \(including marriages of same sex couples\)](#), [divorces](#) and [civil partnerships](#) are available on the ONS website.
5. [Population estimates by marital status](#) provide the estimated resident population by single year of age, sex and marital status (single, married, divorced, and widowed) for England and Wales. In October 2014 ONS published a [consultation response](#) detailing the future of these statistics.
6. The [General Lifestyle Survey](#) provides statistics on households, families, marriages and cohabitation back to the 1970s.

7. The [Overview of Population Statistics](#) outlines the range of demographic statistics which are published by ONS.

Next publication:

Autumn 2015

Background notes

1. The Office for National Statistics would appreciate feedback on the uses made of the statistics and the usefulness of the information provided. Please email families@ons.gsi.gov.uk (preferred) or call +44 (0)1329 447890 to provide feedback.
2. A family is a married, civil partnered or cohabiting couple with or without children, or a lone parent with at least one child. Children may be dependent or non-dependent.
3. Dependent children are those aged under 16 living with at least one parent, or aged 16 to 18 in full-time education, excluding all children who have a spouse, partner or child living in the household.
4. A small number of children are excluded from the analysis on families. These include (a) foster children and (b) children who live in communal establishments which are not covered by the Labour Force Survey.
5. Since 2011 a household has been defined as one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room, sitting room or dining area. Previously a household was defined as a person living alone, or a group of people living at the same address who have the address as their only or main residence and either share one main meal a day or share living accommodation (or both). The aim of the change in definition was to ensure consistency with the definition used in the 2011 Census but has no impact on the comparability of the statistics over time.
6. As estimates of the UK's families and households are based on the Labour Force Survey, all estimates produced are subject to sampling variability. Indications of the robustness of the estimates are provided with the [tables \(439.5 Kb Excel sheet\)](#).
7. The 2014 Labour Force Survey dataset was first published on 29 October 2014. It covers the period from April to June 2014. Further information about the quality of the Labour Force Survey can be found in the [Performance and Quality Monitoring Reports](#).
8. Results from the 2011 Census have now been incorporated into weighting for the Labour Force Survey. The reweighting takes account of the revised population estimates following the 2011 Census. The family and household estimates between 2002 and 2013 have been revised.
9. The EU Statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) is the source of the European comparisons in this bulletin. The statistics can be found [on the Eurostat web page Income and Living Conditions](#) and the countries covered are the EU27 countries.

10. To say that a change is statistically significant means that the change is probably true and unlikely to have occurred by chance. If a change has been indicated as statistically significant within this publication, the confidence intervals around both estimates do not overlap. Further information about the accuracy of these statistics can be found in the [Quality and Methodology Information Report](#).
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