

Measuring National Well-being - Households and Families, 2012

Author Name(s): **Ian Macrory: Office for National Statistics**

Abstract

This article is published as part of the ONS Measuring National Well-being Programme. The programme aims to produce accepted and trusted measures of the well-being of the nation - how the UK as a whole is doing. 'Households and families' is the third in a series which aims to explore in more detail the different domains that have been considered as important for the measurement of National Well-being. It firstly focuses on family and household formation and then on individual aspects of these such as births, children and carers

Introduction

A household is defined as a person living alone or a group of people who live and eat together. Families are defined by marriage, civil partnership or cohabitation, or the presence of children in the household.

Individuals live in different types of households and families during their lifetime. Most people begin life living with their parents and later they may set up home alone typically with other non-related adults or by starting a family. Families are started when people form partnerships or marry or when they have children.

Analysing the population by household and family type is important for many different organisations in the public and private sectors, including policy makers dealing with issues like health, housing and benefits. Problems such as unemployment and poverty can often be better understood by looking at the characteristics of households and families.

Information about households and families also shows how society is changing. This chapter provides the latest data on the number and composition of households and families in the United Kingdom and Great Britain and looks at trends over time.

Key points

Household composition

- There were 25.5 million households in Great Britain in 2011, an increase of 9.2 million since 1961 and 1.6 million since 2001.
- Average household size in Great Britain has decreased from 3.1 persons in 1961 to 2.4 persons in 2011.
- A smaller proportion of households in Great Britain have children living in them in 2011 than in 1961, and those households with children have fewer children living in them.

Families

- In 2011 there were an estimated 17.9 million families in the UK, an increase from 17.0 million in 2001: with the increase of 0.7 million cohabiting couple families and 0.4 million lone parent families offset by a decrease of 0.3 million in the number of married couple families.
- There were an estimated 50.7 million people living in families in the UK in 2011, an increase from 48.8 million in 2001.
- The most common type of family in the UK in 2010 was a married couple with or without children, although the proportion had decreased from an estimated 72.4 per cent of all families in 2001 to 67.2 per cent in 2011.
- In the UK families consisting of a cohabiting couple with or without children increased from 12.5 per cent of all families in 2001 to 16.0 per cent 2011 and lone parent families increased from 14.8 per cent in 2001 to 16.1 per cent in 2011.
- The most common type of family with children in the UK contained one child at the time of the survey in 2011 (46.3 per cent of all families with children).

Marriages

- Around two-thirds of marriages (68.2 per cent) in 2010 in England and Wales were by civil ceremony, a similar proportion to 2008 but an increase compared with 1981 when only 49.0 per cent of marriages were by civil ceremony.

Divorces and dissolution

- In England and Wales between 1990 and 2010 the total number of children of divorcing couples of all ages decreased from nearly 153,000 to just over 104,000: partly because of the overall decrease in the number of divorces and partly because the average number of children involved in each divorce had reduced.

Births

- In 2010 there were 723,200 live births registered in England and Wales compared with 783,200 in 1971 and 706,200 in 2009.
- The age distribution of women giving birth in England and Wales has changed considerably. In 1971 women in the 20 to 24 age category were the largest group giving birth, accounting for 36.5 per cent of all live births. By 2010 this proportion had fallen to 19.0 per cent, and the 30 to 34 age category, whose proportion had doubled to 28 per cent between 1971 and 2010, accounted for more live births than any other group.
- In 1971 91.6 per cent of births in England and Wales were within marriage, by 2010 this had decreased to 53.2 per cent.

Conceptions and abortions

- Provisional estimates for 2010 suggest that the number of conceptions in England and Wales had increased by 1.4 per cent compared with 2009.
- In England and Wales between 1991 and 2010 the number of conceptions by women younger than 30 decreased markedly while the number by women aged 30 and over increased.
- The proportion of conceptions resulting in legal abortions has shown a small decline in 2010 (1.0 per cent), which is not reflected in all age groups. The biggest increase was in under 16's where there was a 4.5 per cent rise.

Children and young people

- In England as at December 2011 there were 1.3 million registered child-care places available at any one time.
- In England in 2011 there were 90,000 children classified as being 'looked after' at any time during the year, an increase of more than 7,000 since 2007.

Carers and caring

- Sixty one per cent of adult informal carers in the UK in 2009/10 were providing care to someone living outside their own household. Parents outside of the household were the main recipients of informal care.

Household composition

Most households consist of a single family or someone living alone (as shown in Tables 1 and 2). This first section looks at people living in private households and excludes those living in institutions such as care homes, prisons, hospitals and other communal establishments.

There were an estimated 25.5 million households in Great Britain in 2011, an increase of 1.6 million from 2001 and of 9.2 million since 1961. The proportion of households with three or more people living in them has fallen from 57 per cent in 1961 to 35 per cent in 2011. Consequently the average household size, which was 3.1 people in 1961, had fallen to 2.4 people by 2001 and has remained at that level since, as seen in **Table 1**. (ONS, 2011a)

Table 1: Households (1) by size

Great Britain

	Percentages					
	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
One person	12	18	22	27	29	29
Two people	30	32	32	34	35	35
Three people	23	19	17	16	16	16
Four people	19	17	18	16	14	13
Five people	9	8	7	5	5	4
Six or more people	7	6	4	2	2	2
All households (=100%) (millions)	16.3	18.6	20.2	22.4	23.9	25.5
Average household size (number of people)	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.4	2.4

Table source: Office for National Statistics**Table notes:**

1. Data are at Q2 (April - June) each year and are not seasonally adjusted. A household is 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).

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Part of the decrease in average household size in Great Britain can be attributed to a reduction in the proportion of families with children, and the decrease in the number of children within those families with children as shown in **Table 2**. (ONS, 2011a)

Table 2: Households: (1,2) by type of household and family

Great Britain

	Percentages					
	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
One person households	12	18	22	27	29	29
One family³ households						
Couple⁴						
No children	26	27	26	28	29	28
1–2 dependent children⁵	30	26	25	20	19	18
3 or more dependent children⁵	8	9	6	5	4	3
Non-dependent children only⁶	10	8	8	8	6	6
Lone parent⁴						
Dependent children⁵	2	3	5	6	7	7
Non-dependent children only⁶	4	4	4	4	3	3
Two or more unrelated adults	5	4	5	3	3	4

	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Multi-family households	3	1	1	1	1	1
All households						
(=100%) (millions)	16.3	18.6	20.2	22.4	23.9	25.5

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Table notes:

1. Data are at Q2 (April–June) each year and are not seasonally adjusted.
2. For 2001 to 2010, a household is 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). For 2011 it 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 or sitting room or dining area.
3. 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.
4. These households may contain individuals who are not family members. Couples include a small number of same-sex couples and civil partners.
5. Dependent children are children (aged under 16, or aged 16 to 18 in full-time education) living with their parent(s), excluding all children who have a spouse, partner or child living in the household. These families may also contain non-dependent children.
6. Non-dependent children are those living with their parent(s), and either (a) aged 19 or over, or (b) aged 16 to 18 who are not in full-time education or who have a spouse, partner or child living in the household. Non-dependent children are sometimes called adult children.

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The proportion of households consisting of one family with children decreased from 54 per cent to 38 per cent between 1961 and 2011. Over the same time period the proportion of households containing couples with one or two dependent children went down from 30 per cent to 18 per cent (from about 4.9 million to 4.5 million households) and those with 3 or more dependent children from 8 per cent to 3 per cent of all households (from about 1.3 million to 0.8 million households). However, most of this change happened before 2001 and there was little change in the proportions of different types of one family household between 2001 and 2011.

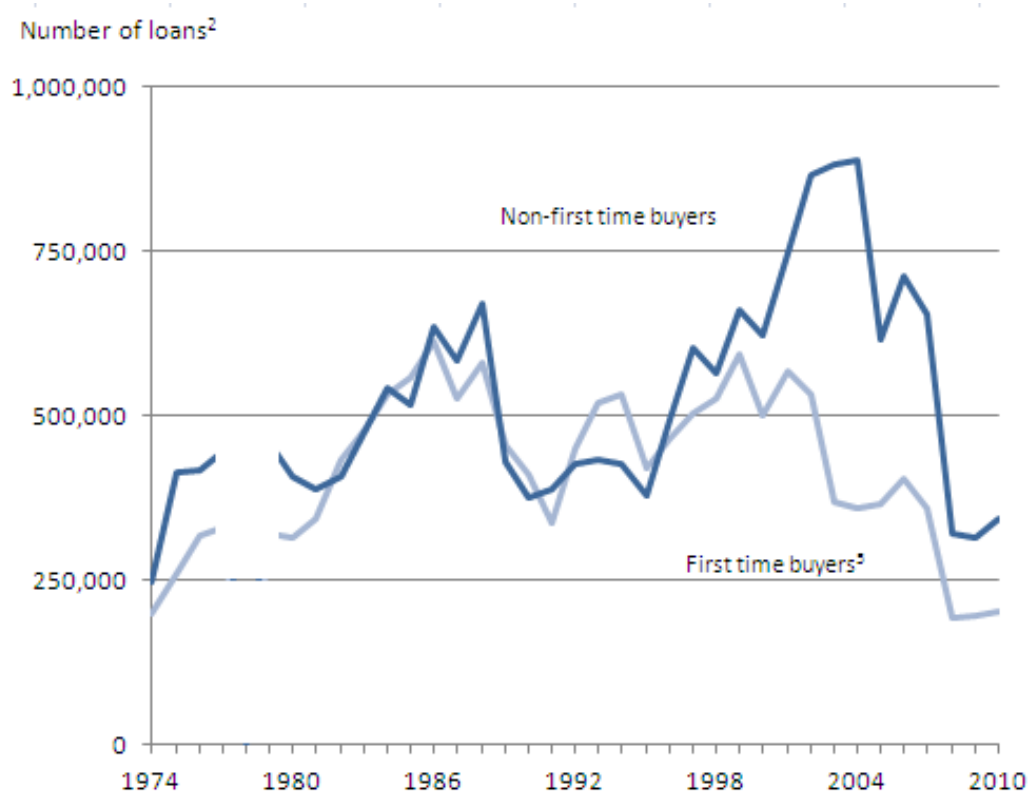
Another contributor to the reduction in average household size, as shown in Tables 1 and 2, is the increase in the proportion of people living alone. In 2011, 29 per cent of all households in Great Britain contained just one person, the same proportion as in 2001, but a considerable increase since 1961 when only 12 per cent of households were one person living alone. However, most of this

increase occurred in the 30 years between 1961 and 1991. Increases since 1991 have been slower, with a rise in the proportion of single person households of only 2 percentage points.

In 2010 there were around 25 million households in Great Britain. Of these, less than 1 per cent were people buying a house for the first time. According to the Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML) there were just over 200,000 loans made to first-time buyers in 2010, accounting for 37 per cent of all mortgages (**Figure 1**). This was an increase of fewer than 8,000 on 2008 when loans to first-time buyers reached their lowest level since the 1974 figure of 198,000. However, in 1974 they accounted for 44 per cent of all mortgages whereas by 2008 only 37 per cent of loans were made to first-time buyers.

Figure 1: Mortgages by type (1,3,4)

Great Britain: Number of mortgages




Source: Council of Mortgage Lenders

Notes:

1. Data are not available for 1978.
2. Totals shown are estimates grossed up from the sample of lenders reporting to reflect total market size.
3. Figures pre-April 2005 are taken from the Survey of Mortgage Lenders or, prior to 1992 Q2 (annually prior to 1993), the Building Societies 5% sample of mortgage completions. RMS figures are not strictly comparable with earlier ones because of material differences in reporting methodologies and the samples of lenders contributing data.
4. Prior to April 2005, estimates of the proportion of first time buyers and movers exclude cases where the previous tenure of buyers is not known.

5. First time buyer numbers will include some buyers who have previously owned a property before, but are not in owner-occupation at the time of this purchase. Estimates from the Survey of English Housing suggest that that around 20% of stated first-time buyers may in fact fall into this category.

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At the start of the credit crisis in 2008, the number of first-time buyers fell sharply to 192,000, a drop of 46.6 per cent on the previous year. By 2010, the figure had recovered slightly and stood at 200,000. This figure is still down by more than two thirds from the historic peak of 613,000 seen in 1986. Non-first time buyer figures showed a similar fall followed by a slight recovery. In 2008, there were 334,000 such buyers, a fall of more than half (51.0 per cent) from the previous year, and decline of 61.3 per cent from the historic peak of 887,000 seen in 2004. By 2010, the figure stood at 343,000.

It has become more difficult for first-time buyers to obtain a mortgage. As recently as 2007, first-time buyers paid deposits averaging 10 per cent of a property's purchase price, but by 2009 this had risen to 25 per cent and now stands at around 20 per cent. CML figures indicate that, by 2010, the average deposit was £26,000, representing 79 per cent of the average annual income from which the mortgage was paid. In 2007 the average deposit was £13,000, or 37 per cent of annual income. This represents a significant increase in difficulty for those wishing to become owner occupiers.

The number of unassisted first-time buyers has also declined sharply, from around 69 per cent of all first-time buyers in 2005 Q3 to 36 per cent in 2011 Q3. For first-time buyers under 30 the decline is even greater, from 64 per cent to 22 per cent over the same period. Since 2005, when the CML began collecting the data, the median age of all first-time buyers has been around 29. By contrast, the median age for unassisted first-time buyers rose from 30 to 33 between 2008 and 2009 and remains at this level. (Council of Mortgage lenders, 2011)

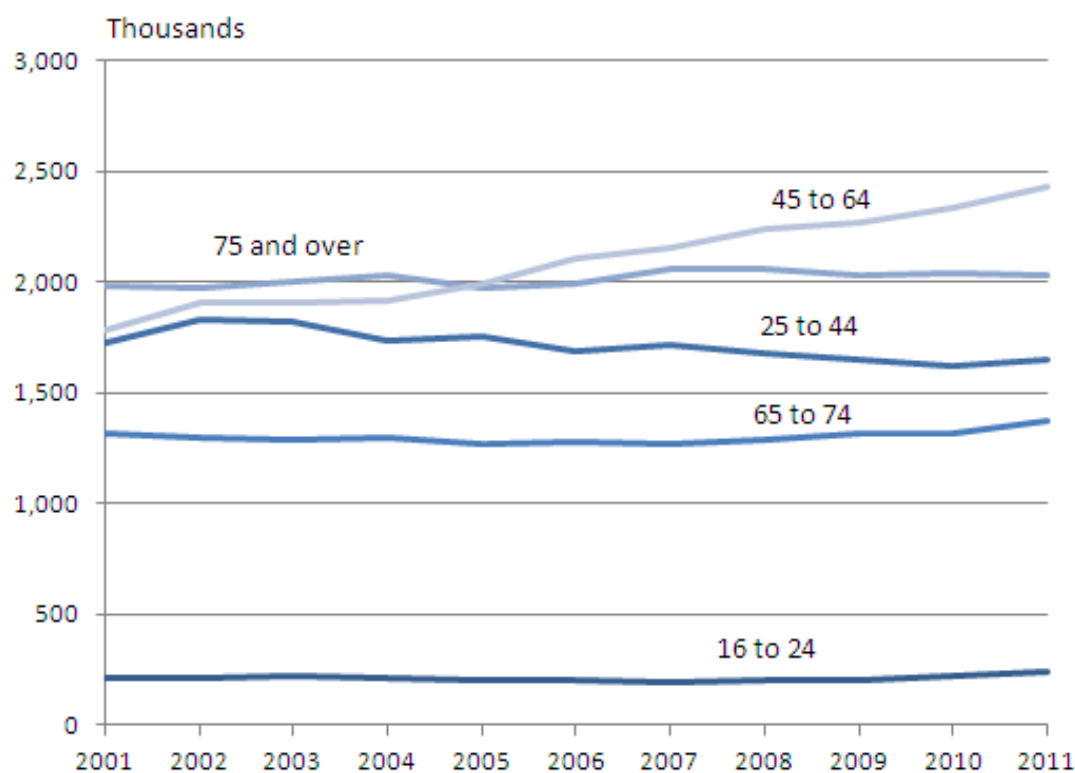
People living alone by age

In 2011 in the UK, there were just over 7.7 million people living alone, compared with just over 7.0 million in 2001.

The percentage of all households in the UK that are single occupant has not varied greatly between 2001 and 2011. It was at its lowest for this period in 2001 (29.4 per cent) and its highest in 2011 (30.2 per cent). However, within the group of people living alone, there have been changes in the age profile (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Number of people living alone: by age group

United Kingdom



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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Those in the 16 to 24 age group had the biggest year on year percentage increase in 2011, up by 6.7 per cent to 240,000. However, the number of 45 to 64 year olds have shown the strongest growth since 2001 with a 36.2 per cent increase to 2.4 million.

As a proportion of those living alone during the period from 2001 to 2011, the groups made up of 16 to 24 year olds and those aged 65 or over have shown relatively small variation (less than 2 percentage points from peak to trough in each case). By contrast, the proportion of single person households occupied by 45 to 64 year olds had a relatively large span of 6.1 percentage points (25.4 per cent of the total in 2001 and 31.5 per cent in 2011). This is more pronounced than the variation in the 25 to 44 year old group that was at its highest as a proportion in 2002 (25.3 per cent) and its lowest in 2011 (21.3 per cent), a difference of 2 percentage points. (ONS, 2011a)

Families

The previous sections examined the composition of households in Great Britain and the UK. This section describes the different types of family¹ in the UK and the people who live in them.

Previous research has found that having children does not have a significant effect on people's happiness, but that it does have a positive effect on overall life satisfaction (Haller and Hadler, 2006). This could suggest that people regard having children as an important part of their overall well-being, even if the presence of children does not improve people's day-to-day emotions. See also [Measuring subjective well-being in the UK: Analysis of subjective well-being data from the Annual population survey, April - September 2011](#).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) 'Initial investigation into Subjective Well-being data from the Opinions Survey' report showed that there was no significant difference between the average ratings for the 'life satisfaction' and 'happy yesterday' questions for people who live in households without children and those who live in households with children. Neither did these two groups have a significant difference between the average ratings to the 'anxious yesterday.' However, the average ratings for the 'worthwhile' question improved significantly for people living in households with children.

The lowest rating for the 'worthwhile' question was given by people living in households where no children are present (7.6 out of 10). This increases to between 7.8 and 7.9 out of 10 for people living with two or more children in their household. This finding suggests that although the presence of children does not alter overall life satisfaction or improve day-to-day emotions, it may bring an increased sense of meaning and purpose to people's lives, therefore increasing average scores for the 'worthwhile' question. (ONS 2011b)

In 2011 there were about 17.9 million families in the UK, an estimated increase of 0.9 million (5.4 per cent) since 2001. The growth in the number of families between 2001 and 2011 is driven by increases in the numbers of cohabiting couples by 0.7 million and of lone parent families by 0.4 million. The second of these is despite a small decrease in the number of lone father families. These increases were offset by a reduction of 0.3 million in the number of married couple families with dependent children. However married couples with no children and those with non-dependent children both showed a very small increase. Between 2001 and 2011 the number of people living in families increased by 3.9 per cent, from 48.8 million to 50.7 million (**Table 3**).

Table 3: Families (1) and number of people living in families (2,3): by family type

United Kingdom

Percentage and numbers

	Families		Dependent children	
	2001	2011	2001	2011
Married couple family	72.4	67.2	74.7	69.4
Civil partnership family^{4,5,6}	-	0.3	-	0.2
Cohabiting couple family⁶	12.5	16.0	11.7	15.4
Same sex cohabiting couple family⁶	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.3
Lone mother family	12.7	14.2	11.7	13.2
Lone father family	2.1	1.9	1.7	1.6
All families (millions = 100%)	17.0	17.9	48.8	50.7

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Table notes:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Non-dependent children are those living with their parent(s), and either (a) aged 19 or over, or (b) aged 16 to 18 who are not in full-time education or who have a spouse, partner or child living in the household. Non-dependent children are sometimes called adult children.
4. Civil partnerships were introduced in the UK in December 2005.
5. The people in families figure for civil partner families is not considered reliable for practical purposes.
6. Families with no children and non-dependent children only have been added together for civil partner couple families and same sex cohabiting couple families to improve the robustness of the estimates.

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Married couple families remained the most common in the UK, although there had been a decrease between 2001 and 2011 in the proportion of families of this type from 72.4 to 67.2 per cent of all families. There had been an increase between 2001 and 2011 in the proportion of families which included cohabiting couples from 12.5 per cent to 16.0 per cent of all families, and in families headed by a lone parent from 14.8 per cent to 16.1 per cent of all families. The growth in lone parent families was in those headed by a lone mother, as both the proportion and number of families headed by a lone father fell.

Of all those individuals (both adults and children) living in families just over 69.4 per cent (35.2 million) lived in a married couple family in 2011, while the proportions living in cohabiting families and lone parent families were both around 15 per cent (7.8 million and 7.5 million individuals respectively). In addition, in 2011 there were approximately 63,000 same sex cohabiting families and 59,000 civil partner families.

In 2011 there were an estimated 7.6 million families with dependent children, an increase of 0.2 million (2.6 per cent) since 2001. The number of dependent children living in families in 2011 was 13.2 million, a decrease of 0.9 per cent on the 2001 figure. (ONS, 2011c)

Table 4: Families (1) and dependent children (2)

United Kingdom

Percentages

	Families		Dependent children	
	2001	2011	2001	2011
Married couple family				
One child	24.2	24.2	13.4	13.9
Two children	29.5	26.0	32.8	30.0
Three or more children	11.8	9.4	21.7	18.1
Total married couple family	65.4	59.6	68.0	62.0
Cohabiting couple family				
One child	5.8	7.6	3.2	4.4
Two children	3.6	4.9	4.0	5.6
Three or more children	1.6	2.0	2.9	4.0
Total cohabiting couple family	10.9	14.5	10.1	14.0
Lone parent family				
One child	12.6	14.5	7.0	8.4
Two children	7.6	8.2	8.5	9.5
Three or more children	3.3	3.1	6.3	6.2
Total lone parent family	23.6	25.8	21.9	24.0
All families				
One child	42.5	46.3	23.7	26.7

	Families		Dependent children	
	2001	2011	2001	2011
Two children	40.8	39.1	45.4	45.1
Three or more children	16.7	14.6	30.9	28.2
Total all families	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Table notes:

1. Excludes a small number of Civil Partnership and same-sex cohabiting couple families. 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.
2. Excludes dependent children who do not live in families.

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The majority of dependent children in the UK live in families of which there are three main types: a married couple, a cohabiting couple or a lone parent family. The proportions of these types of family with dependent children have changed between 2001 and 2011. Married couple families decreased from 65.4 per cent of all families with dependent children in 2001 to 59.6 per cent in 2011 (**Table 4**). The numbers of these families had also gone down from 4.8 million in 2001 to 4.5 million in 2011. The proportion of cohabiting couple families with dependent children increased between 2001 and 2011, from 10.9 per cent to 14.5 per cent, and lone parent families from 23.6 per cent to 25.8 per cent of all families with dependent children.

Of all dependent children living in families, 62.0 per cent (8.2 million) lived in a married couple family in 2011 a decrease from 68.0 per cent (9.0 million) in 2001. The proportion living in cohabiting couple families increased from 10.1 per cent (1.3 million) in 2001 to 14.0 per cent (1.8 million) in 2011. Over the same time period the proportion of dependent children living in lone parent families increased from 21.9 per cent to 24.0 per cent (2.9 million to 3.2 million).

At the time of the survey in 2011 families with one dependent child remained the most common at 46.3 per cent of all families with dependent children. This was an increase from 42.5 per cent in 2001, driven by growth in cohabiting and one parent families, and part of a trend towards smaller families. The proportion of families that currently consists of a married couple with one child was almost unchanged at 24.2 per cent of all families, while those with two or more children both decreased. Similarly, while both cohabiting couple and lone parent families increased overall, the greatest growth in both groups came from among those with one child. In both groups those with three or more children either showed the lowest growth (cohabiting couples) or fell (lone parent

families). Over half of all cohabiting couple and lone parent families had a single dependent child at the time of the survey. However, for married couple families the most frequent number of dependent children was two. The proportion of all families with three or more dependent children decreased from 16.7 per cent in 2001 to 14.6 per cent in 2011. Note that all these types of family could also have non-dependent children, and the survey only shows the number of children in the family at the time of the survey. (ONS, 2011a)

Marriages and civil partnerships

The previous sections showed estimates of households and families at specific points in time. The next sections discuss the events which can cause changes to household and family types, such as marriage, civil partnership², divorce, dissolution of civil partnerships and births.

ONS's 'Analysis of experimental subjective well-being data from the Annual Population Survey, April - September 2011' report showed that people who are not in a partnership report lower average ratings for the 'life satisfaction', 'worthwhile' and 'happy yesterday' questions and higher average ratings for the 'anxious yesterday' question.

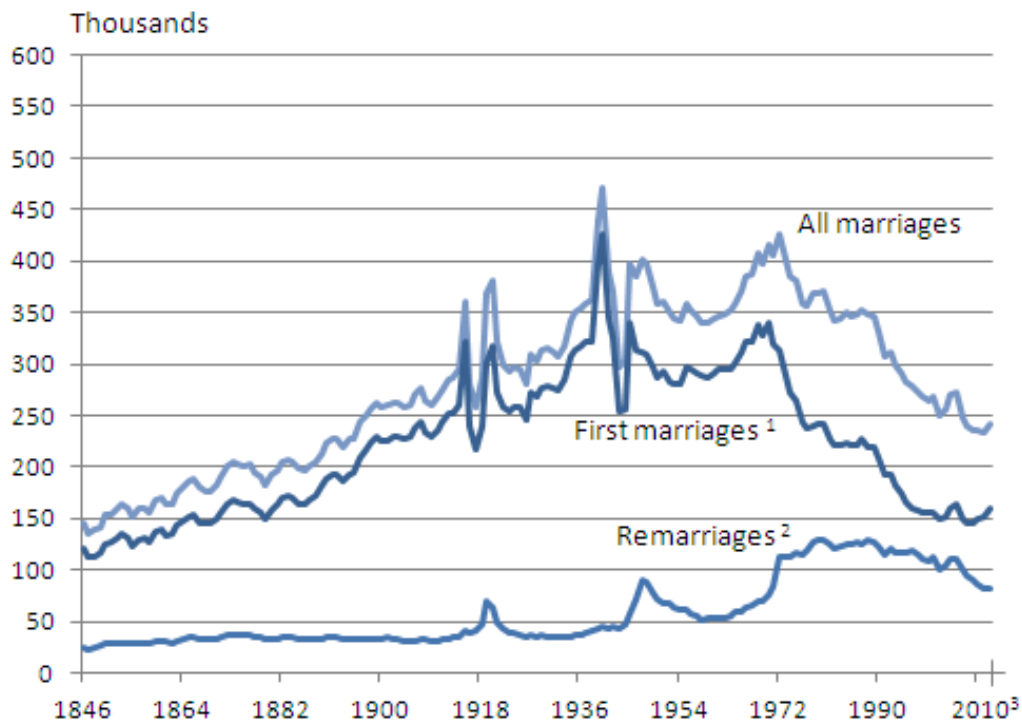
People who are married or in civil partnerships reported the highest average levels of life satisfaction (7.7 out of 10), significantly higher than cohabiting couples (7.5 out of 10). Cohabiting couples reported significantly higher average ratings for the 'life satisfaction' question than single people (7.3 out of 10). People who are widowed had an average rating of 6.8 out of 10. The lowest average rating for the 'life satisfaction' question were reported by people who are divorced or separated, including those who have dissolved civil partnerships (6.6 out of 10); see also [Measuring National Well-being Our relationships article](#).

The Marriage Act 1836 and the Registration Act 1836 came into force in 1837 in England and Wales providing the statutory basis for regulating and recording marriages. There were 118,100 marriages registered in 1838, the first full year of civil registration in England and Wales. Annual numbers of marriages generally rose steadily from the 1840s to the 1940s, apart from peaks and troughs around the two world wars.

The provisional number of marriages registered in England and Wales in 2010 was 241,100, an increase of around 8,700 since 2009 and the highest figure since 2005 (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3: Marriages: by previous marital status

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. For both parties.
2. For one or both parties.
3. Figures for 2010 are provisional.

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The number of marriages in England and Wales that were the first for both partners peaked in 1940 at 426,100, when 91 per cent of all marriages were the first for both partners. First marriages fell below three-quarters (73 per cent) of all marriages in 1972 and continued to decrease, reaching a low of 58 per cent of all marriages in 1996. Provisional figures for 2010 show that there were around

158,980 marriages which were the first for both partners, two-thirds (66 per cent) of all marriages. The last time the proportion of marriages that were first marriages for both parties was this high was in 1977. The 2010 figure is, in part, driven by an increase of 8.7 per cent in the number of first marriages since 2007 coupled with a 7.9 per cent decrease in remarriages during the same period.

Remarriages rose by about a third between 1971 and 1972, following the introduction of the Divorce Reform Act 1969 in England and Wales, and continued an upward trend until 1989, after which they began falling. Provisional estimates for 2010 show that 34 per cent of all marriages (82,100) were remarriages for one or both parties. Although this was a slight increase on 2009 it was nonetheless in line with the prevailing downward trend that has been apparent since the mid 1990's, although during this time there have been some year-on-year increases.

In England and Wales marriage rates have been in steady decline since 2003 reaching their lowest level in 2009 since they were first calculated in 1862. In 2010, the provisional marriage rate for both men and women increased slightly. The rate for men was 21.8 men marrying per 1,000 unmarried men aged 16 and over, up from 21.4 in 2009. The provisional marriage rate for women in 2010 was 19.8 women marrying per 1,000 unmarried women aged 16 and over, up from 19.3 in 2009. (ONS 2009)

In both Scotland and Northern Ireland the number of marriages increased between 2009 and 2010: in Scotland from 27,524 to 28,480, a rise of 3.5 per cent, while in Northern Ireland the number of marriages increased to 8,156 from 7,931 an increase of 2.8 per cent.

During the 1990's civil ceremonies overtook religious ceremonies as the most common form of marriage in England and Wales, from 49 per cent in 1991 to 62 per cent in 1999. Of the 241,100 marriages that were registered in England and Wales in 2010, more than two-thirds (68 per cent) were solemnised in civil, as opposed to religious, ceremonies and for the first time more than half (52 per cent) of all marriages were in Approved Premises. As well as the changes in the type and place of ceremony there has also been a change in the seasonal distribution of marriages: in 1981 62 per cent of marriages took place between April and September but this had risen to 70 per cent in 2010.

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into force on 5 December 2005 in the UK, when couples could give notice of their intention to form a civil partnership. The Act enables same-sex couples aged 16 and over to obtain legal recognition of their relationship. The first day that couples could formally form a partnership was 19 December 2005 in Northern Ireland, 20 December 2005 in Scotland and 21 December 2005 in England and Wales.

The total number of partnerships formed since the Civil Partnership Act came into force in December 2005 until the end of 2010 is 46,622. The highest number of civil partnerships registered in one year in the UK was 16,106: this was in 2006 the first full year of registration. The following year registrations dropped by almost half to 8,728, in 2009 there were 6,281 registrations and in 2010 there were 6,385 civil partnerships. This represents a very small increase of 1.7 per cent between 2009 and 2010.

The number of civil partnerships increased in all countries of the UK between 2009 and 2010, apart from Scotland where the number of civil partnerships fell by 6.6 per cent to 465. There was

an increase of 1.7 per cent in England (5,536 partnerships in 2010), 9.8 per cent in Wales (268 partnerships in 2010) and 20.8 per cent in Northern Ireland (116 partnerships in 2010). (ONS, 2010a)

Divorce and dissolution

Another way in which family structures change is following divorce, or for civil partnerships dissolution. Between 1918 and 1938 the number of divorces each year in England and Wales gradually increased from 1,100 to 6,300. Following the 1937 Divorce Act, which extended the grounds on which divorce was allowed, numbers increased considerably throughout the 1940s to a peak of around 60,300 in 1947. Although the number of divorces then fell to 22,700 in 1958, there was a further increase during the 1960s.

The Divorce Reform Act (1969) which came into effect in January 1971 and was subsequently consolidated into the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, had a considerable impact on divorce numbers in England and Wales. In 1972 there were 119,000 divorces, an increase of almost 60 per cent on the previous year. From 1972 onwards there was a generally upward trend in divorces in England and Wales, reaching the highest recorded number of 165,000 in 1993.

The numbers of divorces were variable between 1993 and 2002, and there was a consistent downward trend from 2003 to 2008, including a sharp drop between 2004 and 2005. After a sharp fall between 2008 and 2009 divorces were higher in 2010 than in 2009. In 2009 there were about 113,900 divorces in England and Wales compared with 121,700 in 2008, a decrease of 6.4 per cent. In 2010 this rose to 119,600, a 4.9 per cent increase, the first increase since 2003. It should be noted that over this period the number of marriages also declined and this may have contributed to a fall in divorces.

In Scotland, there were fewer than 10,200 divorces registered in 2009/10, a fall of 9.8 per cent on the previous year. In Northern Ireland in 2010, 2,600 divorces were recorded, an increase of 19.5 per cent compared with the previous year (Scottish Government, 2010a; NISRA, 2010a).

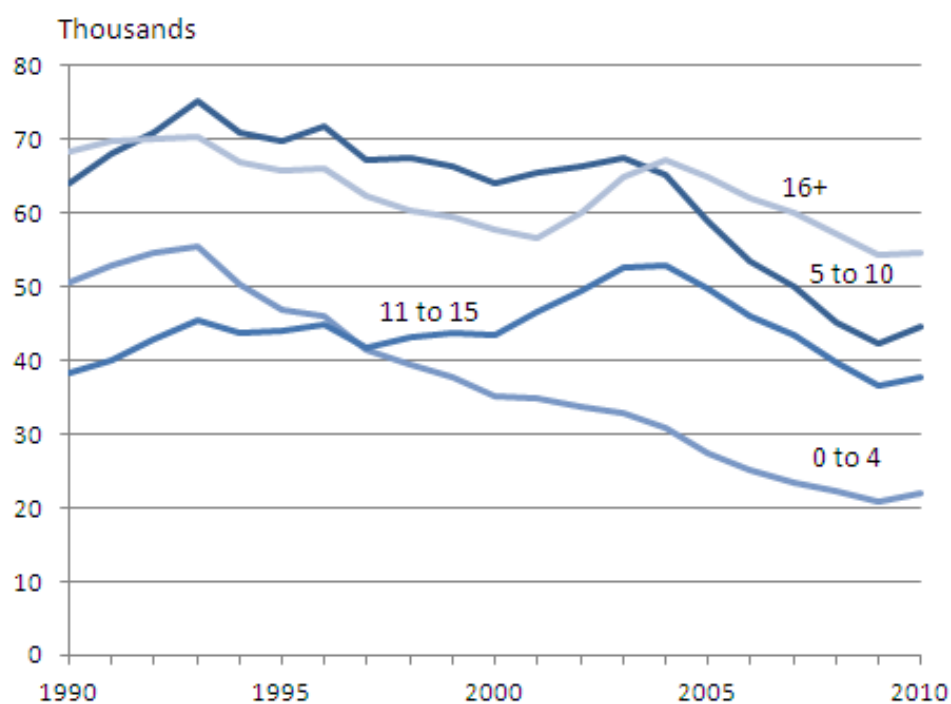
In order to obtain the dissolution of a civil partnership, a couple must have been in a registered partnership or a recognised foreign relationship for at least 12 months. In 2010 there were, according to provisional estimates, 509 civil partnership dissolutions granted in the UK, an increase from 353 in 2009, 180 in 2008 and 41 in 2007 (ONS, 2010b). There were more dissolutions granted to female couples than male throughout the UK in 2010: 60 per cent of dissolutions in England and Wales, 56 per cent in Scotland and 67 per cent in Northern Ireland being granted to female couples. 2010 was the first year any civil partner dissolutions were recorded in Northern Ireland. In Scotland the gender of individuals receiving a dissolution was not collected until September 2010. For this reason the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) inferred the gender of individuals from the names on the divorce decree. In many circumstances this would be straightforward but in some cases a name or both names may be gender neutral. (ONS, 2010b)

As already discussed family type is changed when divorce occurs, and when a divorcing couple already have children together this affects the family type in which those children live. There has been a considerable change not only in the number of children living in families affected by divorce but also in the distribution of their ages. The total number of children of divorcing couples was

104,000 in 2010. This was a decrease of 40.7 per cent from the historic peak of 1993 when the figure was 176,000. However, 2010 is the first year to show a year on year increase since 2003. The decrease since the peak is partly because of the overall decrease in the number of divorces and partly because the average number of children involved in each divorce had reduced (ONS 2011d).

Figure 4: Number of children (1) of divorced couples: by age (2) group

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Children are those treated as children of the family, and can include children born outside marriage, children of previous marriages, adopted and step children.
2. Ages are those at petition to divorce.

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There was also a change in the ages at which children were affected by divorce. This is particularly noticeable for children aged 0 to 4, where after an increase to about 55,500 in 1993, numbers fell in each year to reach 21,900 in 2010. By 2004, the highest number of children who were affected

by divorce were those aged 16 and over. From 2004 onwards numbers in each of the age groups decreased (**Figure 4**).

Notes

1. A family is a married or cohabiting couple living together with or without children or a lone parent living with his or her children. A family could also consist of grandparent(s) with their grandchild or grandchildren if the parent(s) are absent.
2. Civil partners have equal treatment to married couples in a number of legal matters such as tax, employment benefits, pension benefits, maintenance and recognition for immigration and nationality purposes.

Conceptions, births and abortions

Births

One of the largest changes over time, as noted above, is in the types of family which have dependent children: there has been a decrease in the proportion living in married couple families and an increase in the proportion that are living in cohabiting couple and lone parent families. This section examines changes in the numbers of children born within and outside marriage, together with the changes in the ages of their mothers. There is also a discussion of the differences over time in the registration of their births and how this relates to the change in the types of family with dependent children.

The number of births in England and Wales increased year-on-year in most years between 2001 and 2010, rising from 594,600 in 2001 to 723,200 in 2010. However, in spite of the considerable increase, the total number of births has still not reached the level seen in 1971 when there were 783,200 births, although birth numbers have been higher such as in 1961 and 1947; see also [Measuring National Well-being Population article](#).

Table 5: Live births: by age of mother and registration type (1)

England and Wales

Thousands (2)

	Under 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 and over	All ages
All live births							
1971	82.6	285.7	247.2	109.6	45.2	12.7	783.2
1981 ³	56.6	194.5	215.8	126.6	34.2	6.9	634.5
1991	52.4	173.4	248.7	161.3	53.6	9.8	699.2
2001	44.2	108.8	159.9	178.9	86.5	16.3	594.6
2008	44.7	136.0	193.0	192.5	116.2	26.4	708.7
2009	43.2	136.0	194.1	191.6	114.3	27.0	706.2
2010	40.6	137.3	199.2	202.5	115.8	27.7	723.2
Outside Marriage							
1971	21.6	22.0	11.5	6.3	3.2	1.1	65.7
1981 ³	26.4	28.8	14.3	7.9	27.3	0.9	81.0
1991	43.4	77.8	52.4	25.7	9.8	2.1	211.3
2001	39.5	68.1	56.8	45.2	23.3	5.1	238.1
2008	42.0	97.7	82.6	54.4	34.6	9.5	320.8
2009	40.9	100.1	85.6	55.8	34.1	9.6	326.2
2010	38.9	103.4	90.8	60.6	35.0	10.2	338.8
Within Marriage							
1971	61.1	263.7	235.7	103.4	42.1	11.6	717.5
1981 ³	30.1	165.7	201.5	118.7	31.5	6.0	553.5
1991	8.9	95.6	196.3	135.5	43.8	7.7	487.9
2001	4.6	40.7	103.1	133.7	63.2	11.1	356.5
2008	2.7	38.2	110.4	138.1	81.6	16.9	387.9

	Under 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 and over	All ages
2009	2.3	35.9	108.5	135.8	80.2	17.4	380.1
2010	1.7	34.0	108.5	141.9	80.8	17.6	384.4

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Table notes:

1. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 contained provisions enabling two females in a same-sex couple to register a birth from 1st September 2009 onwards. Due to the small numbers in 2009 and 2010, births registered to a same-sex couple in a civil partnership (22 in 2009, 335 in 2010) are included with marital births while births registered to a same-sex couple outside a civil partnership (2 in 2009, 140 in 2010) are included with births outside marriage.
2. Figures have been rounded to the nearest one hundred.
3. For 1981 data the processing was delayed due to the late submission of registrations. As a result the data for 1981 is estimated and figures for age of mother are based on a ten per cent sample.

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The average age for women giving birth in England and Wales has increased from just over 26.6 years in 1971 to 29.5 years in 2010 (ONS, 2010c) and this is reflected in the age distribution in **Table 5**. In 1971, nearly four out of five of all live births (79 per cent) were to women aged under 30: by 2010 about half of all live births (52 per cent) were to women in this age group. Comparing live births in 1971 and 2010, the number of live births decreased for women in each of the three age groups under 20, 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 and increased for women in each of the three age groups 30 to 34, 35 to 39 and 40 and over.

The balance between numbers of registrations of births outside and within marriage has also altered, reflecting the change in family structure discussed earlier in this article. More than five times as many babies were born outside marriage in 2010 compared with 1971. In 1971 there were 65,700 live births outside marriage in England and Wales, 8.4 per cent of all live births in that year. Live births outside marriage increased both numerically and as a proportion of all births reaching 338,800 (46.8 per cent) in 2010. Over the same time period the number of live births within marriage had decreased by 46.0 per cent from 717,500 to 384,400.

However, the increases and decreases in overall births, and those within and outside marriage were not the same for all age groups. The number of births within marriage in the under 20 age group decreased from 61,100 in 1971 to 1,700 in 2010 (a decrease of 97 per cent), and the 20 to 24 age group decreased from 263,700 in 1971 to 34,000 in 2010 (a decrease of 230,000 or 87 per cent). In the older age groups there have been increases in the number of live births within marriage: for example in the 35 to 39 age group the increase between 1971 and 2009 was 38,600 live births (from 42,100 to 80,700 or 92 per cent).

By contrast, live births outside marriage have generally increased in all age groups although there is some variation in individual age groups in particular decades. The increase was most noticeable between 1981 and 1991: during this period it varied by age group with mothers aged under 20, and 40 and over showing the smallest increases. However it should be noted that births in the 40 and over age group represent only around 1.4 per cent of those giving birth outside of marriage at that time.

For births outside marriage, the increase in age of mothers is less marked (the proportion of under 30s has fallen from 84 per cent of births to 69 per cent, a much smaller decrease than that of births within marriage).

Conceptions and Abortions

Information about conceptions¹ also shows a change in age structure (**Table 6**). Provisional estimates in 2010 indicate that there were 909,200 conceptions in England and Wales, an increase of nearly 13,000 (1.4 per cent) from 896,300 in 2009. The number of conceptions in 2010 was also higher than in 1991 and 2001. There was an increase in the overall rate of conception between 2009 and 2010 of one additional conception per 1,000 women (from 81 to 82 conceptions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44, see footnote 4 to table 6).

Table 6: Conceptions: (1) by age of woman at conception

England and Wales (2)

	Age of woman at conception								
	Under 16	Under 18	Under 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 and over	All ages
Numbers (thousands)									
1991	7.5	40.1	101.6	233.3	281.5	167.5	57.6	12.1	853.7
2001	7.9	41.0	96.0	161.6	199.3	196.7	92.2	17.8	763.7
2008	7.6	41.4	103.3	198.5	237.8	207.1	115.6	26.5	888.6
2009	7.2	38.3	97.9	199.5	242.2	213.3	116.5	26.8	896.3
2010	6.7	34.6	91.7	201.6	247.3	222.4	118.3	27.9	909.2
Rates (conceptions³ per thousand women in age-group)									
1991	8.9	44.6	64.1	120.2	135.1	90.1	34.4	6.6	77.7
2001	8.0	42.7	60.8	102.5	114.2	96.7	44.3	9.6	70.3
2008	7.8	40.7	60.1	108.7	133.2	121.7	58.1	12.6	79.9
2009	7.5	38.3	57.3	108.5	133.8	125.9	60.1	12.8	80.9
2010	7.0	35.5	54.6	108.6	134.1	129.4	62.9	13.5	82.3

	Under 16	Under 18	Under 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 and over	All ages
Percentage terminated by abortion									
1991	51.1	39.9	34.5	22.2	13.4	13.7	22.0	41.6	19.4
2001	55.8	45.7	40.4	29.7	18.4	14.6	20.4	34.6	23.2
2008	61.5	49.4	42.4	28.0	17.4	12.8	16.3	30.0	21.8
2009	59.8	48.8	41.9	27.1	16.5	12.4	15.8	29.1	21.0
2010	62.5	49.9	42.8	27.3	16.4	12.6	15.9	28.2	20.8

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Table notes:

1. Conception figures are estimates derived from birth registrations and abortion notifications.
2. Data are for residents of England and Wales.
3. Revised mid-2002 to mid-2008 population estimates published on 13 May 2010 have been used in the calculation of conception rates. Figures may therefore differ from those published previously. Rates for women of all ages, under 16, under 18, under 20 and 40 and over are based on the population of women aged 15-44, 13-15, 15-17, 15-19 and 40-44 respectively.

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However, these increases were not uniform across age groups. Between 2009 and 2010 conception rates (per 1,000 women) showed a noticeable increase only among those age groups where women were aged 30 and over. Women in their 20's showed almost no increase in the rate per 1,000 and the rate among those in the teenage age groups fell. This pattern was also shown in the longer-term trend. All the age groups 30 and over showed increases between 1991 and 2010 and all age groups below 20 showed decreases. The 25 to 29 age group showed the smallest fall in conception rate from 135.1 per thousand to 134.1 per thousand.

Women in the 25 to 29 age group continue to have the highest number and rate per 1,000 of conceptions. However, while those in the 20 to 24 age group had the second highest number and rate of conceptions in 1991, by 2010 they had been replaced by those in the 30 to 34 age group: this group having previously had the third highest number of conceptions and rates per 1,000 in 1991.

The proportion of conceptions resulting in legal abortions has shown a small decline in 2010 (1.0 per cent) to 20.8 per cent of all conceptions. This proportion varies between age groups. The proportions of conceptions resulting in legal abortion were highest in the lower age groups and generally decreased with age, reaching a minimum of 12.6 per cent in the 30 to 34 age group. The proportion then shows significant increases for the 35 to 39 (15.9 per cent) and the 40 and over age groups (28.2 per cent). In girls aged under 16, 62.5 per cent of pregnancies were terminated

legally. Slightly less than a half of conceptions (49.9 per cent) in women aged under 18 led to a legal abortion according to provisional estimates for 2010. The overall percentage of conceptions leading to a legal abortion was almost unchanged between 2009 and 2010, falling from 21.0 per cent to 20.8 per cent.

Between 1991 and 2010 the percentage of conceptions resulting in legal abortion increased by 1.4 percentage points, from 19.4 per cent to 20.8 per cent in England and Wales. However, the largest increases over this time period were in the younger age groups which include girls and women up to the age of 30. For those aged 30 and over, there were decreases in all age groups, with a particularly marked fall in the 40 and over age group from 41.6 per cent in 1991 to 28.2 per cent in 2010.

In Scotland there has been a fall in the number and rate of abortions for the past two years, 12,826 in 2010 compared with 13,108 in 2009 and 13,902 in 2008 (representing rates of 12.3 per 1000 women aged 15–44 in 2010, 12.6 in 2009 and 13.3 in 2008). This fall is a change to the overall pattern of increase since the implementation of the 1967 Abortion Act, although small dips for short periods have been observed before.

As in previous years, the rate of terminations in 2010 was highest in younger women, 16–19 (21.4 per 1000) and those aged 20–24 (22.4 per 1000). Lower rates are seen in the older age groups; women aged 25–29 (15.3 per 1000); aged 30–34 (10.8 per 1000); aged 35–39 (6.3 per 1000) and in women aged over 40 (2.1 per 1000). (Scottish Government, 2010b).

In Northern Ireland, abortion is illegal and is only considered lawful in exceptional circumstances. As there are such a small number of abortions, and in order to protect patient confidentiality, there are no comparable conception figures for Northern Ireland. (NISRA 2010b)

Notes

1. Conception estimates include pregnancies that result in one or more live births or stillbirths or which are terminated by a legal abortion. They do not include miscarriages or illegal abortions.

Children and young people

Childcare is very important to many families, particularly where one or both parents are working. It can be provided informally by family, friends or neighbours, or formally by a registered childminder or childcare company: many parents and guardians use a combination of both formal and informal childcare.

Table 7: Registered child-care places and providers, 31 December 2011

England

Thousands

	Childminders		Childcare on: non-domestic premises		All	
	Providers ²	Places ³	Providers ²	Places ³	Providers ²	Places ³
All registers	53.6	267.9	16.5	686	70.2	955.7
EYR and CCR	3.1	14.6	1.6	70.1	4.8	85
EYR and VCR	0	0	0.1	6.7	0.2	6.8
EYR only	0.2	0.7	7.5	260.9	7.8	262
EYR total	56.9	283.2	25.9	1,023.80	83	1,309.40

Table source: Office for Standards in Education

Table notes:

1. Register(s): Ofsted register care provided for children on two registers, the Early Years Register (EYR) and the Childcare Register, which has a compulsory (CCR) and voluntary (VCR) component. People can apply to join one register or both registers at the same time. Most childcare providers caring for children aged under eight must register with Ofsted unless the law says they are not required to do so. If a childcare provider is not required to register with Ofsted, then in some circumstances they may choose to do so by joining the voluntary part of the Childcare Register (VCR).
2. Providers are the number of providers registered on the database at the at the end of the relevant period. As not all providers inform Ofsted that they have ceased provision, this number is likely to be higher than the actual number of providers.
3. Registered places are the number of children that may attend the provision at any one time. Registered places are not the number of places occupied, nor the number of children who may benefit from receiving places through providers offering sessions at different times of the day. Place numbers are only collected for providers on the Early Years Register. For these providers, the numbers show the total places available for children under eight. Averages are used for a very small number of providers whose place numbers are not available at the time of the analysis. There are very small discrepancies in totals due to rounding.

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In England in December 2011 there were more than 96,000 registered childcare providers: including around 10,000 childminders and nearly 2,000 childcare providers on non-domestic property who are signed to the voluntary childcare register and not listed above (**Table 7**). Between them they were responsible for providing more than 1.3 million childcare places. Registered childminders and home childcare providers account for more than two-thirds of providers, 58,000 and 10,000 respectively, but less than a quarter of all places, around 283,000.

Instead the majority of childcare is provided by those using non-domestic property, for example by nurseries and crèches or pre and after school clubs. These provide more than a million childcare places. As a childcare place may be shared by more than one child during a week the actual number of children receiving childcare may be higher. However it should also be noted that these are spaces and not all available spaces may be taken up. (Ofsted 2011)

Children can come under the responsibility of their local authority if their parents or guardians are having difficulty looking after them. 'Looked after' children can be placed with foster carers, placed for adoption or remain with their parents. In 2011 there were nearly 91,000 children who were looked after in England, an increase of more than 7,000 since 2007, most of which came from increases of instances of 'Abuse or neglect', followed by 'Family dysfunction'.

Table 8: Children looked after (1) at 31 March, by need for care (2,3)

England

	Thousands				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Abuse or neglect	48.7	48.4	49.1	51.5	53.8
Child's disability	3.1	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.9
Parents illness or disability	4.4	4.1	3.9	3.9	3.9
Family in acute stress	7.1	7.3	7.6	8.3	8.5
Family dysfunction	9.3	9.3	9.9	11.3	12.7
Socially unacceptable behaviour	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.2
Low income	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
Absent parenting	8.2	8.1	8.5	7.8	6.7
Total	83.5	82.5	84.3	88.2	90.9

Table source: Education

Table notes:

1. Excludes children looked after exclusively under one or more agreed series of short term placements at any time during the years ending 31 March.
2. The most applicable category of the eight 'Need Codes' at the time the child started to be looked after rather than necessarily the entire reason they are looked after.
3. Placement and category of need relate to child's latest episode of care during the year.

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Although the number of children being looked after has increased year-on-year since 2008, this may be due to increased intervention by social services rather than an increase in any of the categories stated. The most common reason for a child being looked after was 'Abuse or neglect' which accounted for nearly 60 per cent of all cases (**Table 8**). The next most common reason was 'Family dysfunction' (14 per cent) although family reasons, excluding parental illness or disability, between them accounted for nearly 31 per cent of cases. Disability, either the child's or the parent's disability or illness, accounted for just over 7 per cent of all looked after children.

During the same period (2007 to 2011) the number of looked after children in Scotland increased from 14,000 to 16,000, although a category of need breakdown is not available.

Wales had 5,415 children who began to be looked after in 2011. This is a decrease on the previous year's figure of 5,160 but higher than the 2007 figure of 4,640.

Carers and caring

Informal carers are adults or children who provide any regular service or help to someone who is sick, disabled or elderly, but not in a paid capacity. Many carers balance their caring responsibilities with paid work. Those in full-time employment made up the largest group (36 per cent) of carers in the UK in 2009/10, regardless of whether they were providing care within or outside their household (Figure 5). The next largest group was those in retirement (23 per cent), followed by those who were economically inactive (20 per cent) and then those in part-time employment (17 per cent).

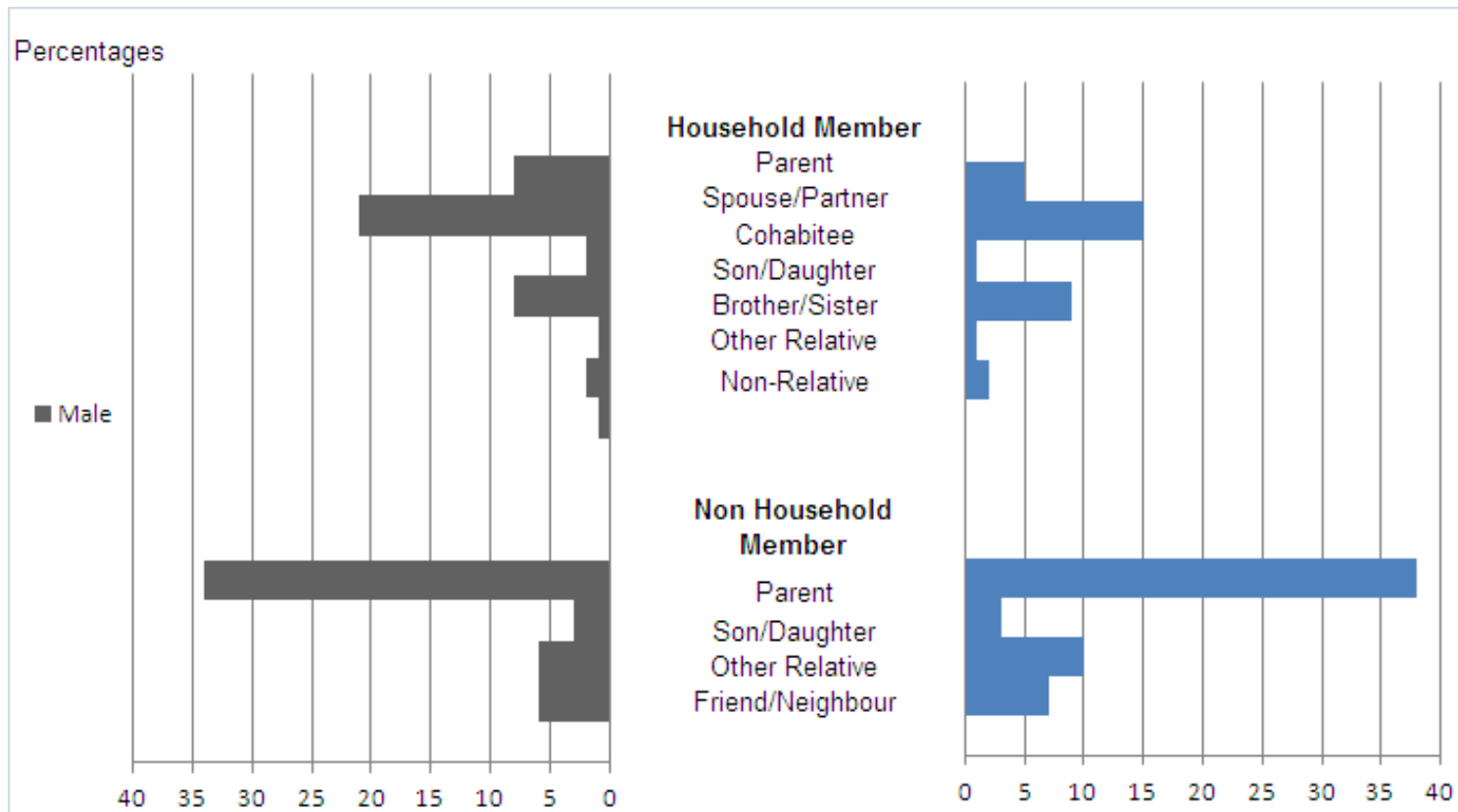
The proportion of male carers in full-time employment was much higher than the proportion of female carers (47 per cent compared with 28 per cent) but the reverse was true for those in part-time employment (8 per cent of men and 23 per cent of women), this may reflect that traditionally women are more likely than men to be in part-time employment. However, there was little difference between men and women who reported caring in retirement (25 per cent and 22 per cent respectively).

Sixty one per cent of adult informal carers in the UK in 2009/10 were providing care for someone living outside their own household. Family members were the main recipients of informal care from both household and non-household members. There were some similarities between men and women in the pattern of relationships between the carer and the person being cared for. The largest group cared for by both men and women were parents who were non-household members (34 per cent and 38 per cent respectively).

Within the household, spouses or civil partners were the most common recipients of care from both men (21 per cent) and women (15 per cent). Around 8 per cent of male and female carers provided care to non-family members, whether within their own household or not. See also '[Measuring National Well-being: What we do](#)' which discusses the hours spent in giving care. (FRS, 2011)

Figure 5: Adult informal carers by relationship to person being cared for, by household type 2009/10

United Kingdom



Source: Family Resource Survey - Department for Work and Pensions

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The programme aims to produce accepted and trusted measures of the well-being of the nation - how the UK as a whole is doing. It is about looking at 'GDP and beyond' and includes:

- Greater analysis of the national economic accounts, especially to understand household income, expenditure and wealth.
- Further accounts linked to the national accounts, including the UK Environmental Accounts and valuing household production and 'human capital'.
- Quality of life measures, looking at different areas of national well-being such as health, relationships, job satisfaction, economic security, education environmental conditions.
- Working with others to include the measurement of the well-being of children and young people as part of national well-being.
- Measures of 'subjective well-being' - individuals' assessment of their own well-being.
- Headline indicators to summarise national well-being and the progress we are making as a society.

The programme is underpinned by a communication and engagement workstream, providing links with Cabinet Office and policy departments, international developments, the public and other stakeholders. The programme is working closely with Defra on the measurement of 'sustainable development' to provide a complete picture of national well-being, progress and sustainable development.

Find out more on the [Measuring National Well-being](#) website pages.

Background notes

1. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html or from the Media Relations Office email: media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk

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