

Personal-confidential-statistics until 9.30am 14 April 2011

Families and households in the UK, 2001 to 2010

Date: 14 April 2011

Coverage: United Kingdom

Theme: Population

This bulletin presents statistics on the number of families by type and children in families by type. It also present statistics on household size, household types, and people living alone.

Key findings

- In 2010 there were 17.9 million families in the UK. Of these 12.2 million consisted of a married couple with or without children
- The number of opposite sex cohabiting couple families increased from 2.1 million in 2001 to 2.7 million in 2010. The number of dependent children living in opposite sex cohabiting couple families increased from 1.3 million to 1.8 million over the same period
- There were 26.0 million households in the UK in 2010. Of these 29 per cent consisted of only one person and almost 20 per cent consisted of four or more people

Families

Table 1: Families: by family type in 2001 and 2010

United Kingdom

Thousands

Family type	2001			2010		
	With dependent children	Without dependent children ¹	Total families	With dependent children	Without dependent children ¹	Total families
Married couple family	4,833	7,447	12,280	4,628	7,551	12,179
Civil partner couple family ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	43	45
Opposite sex cohabiting couple family	808	1,321	2,129	1,071	1,667	2,737
Same sex cohabiting couple family	.. ³	44	45	2	48	51
Lone parent family	1,745	767	2,512	1,953	945	2,898
All families	7,386	9,579	16,966	7,657	10,253	17,911

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.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

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. Table 1 shows that the total number of families in the UK has increased by 6 per cent since 2001, faster than population growth over this period. This is due to a slight fall in the average number of people in a family.

The number of married couple families decreased by 100,000 between 2001 and 2010 to 12.2 million in 2010. This is consistent with both the increase in opposite sex cohabiting couple families over the same period from 2.1 million to 2.8 million, and the general decrease in the number of marriages since the early 1970s. In 2010 there were an estimated 51,000 families consisting of a same sex cohabiting couple and 45,000 consisting of a civil partnered couple, the latter having steadily increased since the introduction of civil partnerships in the UK in December 2005.

In 2010 a similar percentage of married couple and cohabiting couple families had dependent children, 38 per cent and 39 per cent respectively. This compares with 4 per cent¹ of civil partner couple families and 5 per cent¹ of same sex cohabiting couple families. This percentage grows to 67 per cent of lone parent families, partly because it is not possible to be a lone parent without children. The number of lone parent families with dependent children increased by 12 per cent between 2001 and 2010 to 2.0 million in 2010. Lone mothers headed 9 out of 10 lone parent families with dependent children and lone fathers headed 1 in 10. These proportions have remained stable since 2001.

Dependent children

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. There were 13.3 million dependent children living in families in the UK in 2010, the same number as in 2001.

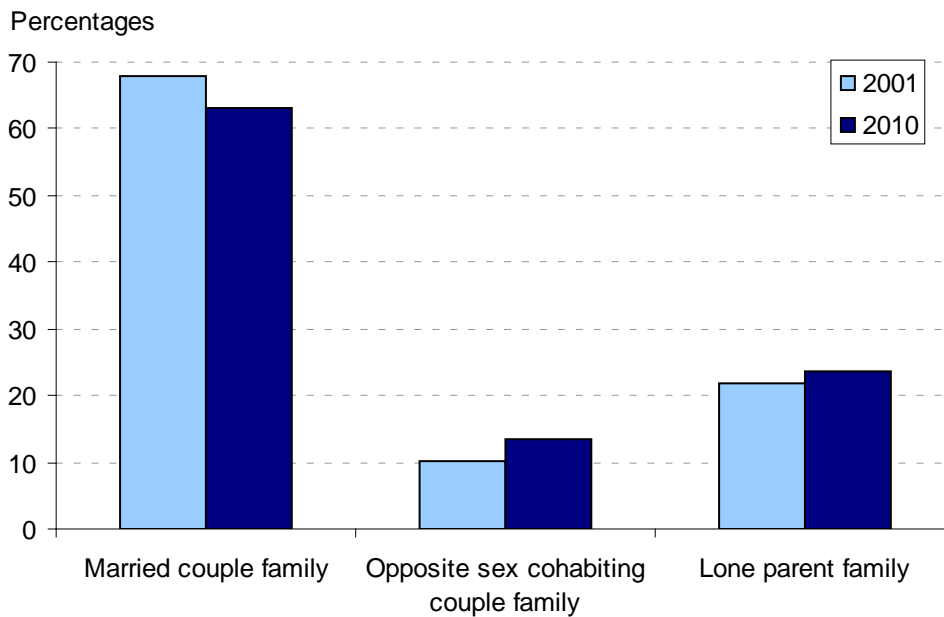
While the number of dependent children has not significantly changed, the types of families in which they live has changed. Figure 1 shows that 63 per cent of dependent children lived in a married couple family in 2010, a decrease from 68 per cent in 2001. Over the same period, the percentage of dependent children living in opposite sex cohabiting couple families increased by three percentage points to 13 per cent, and those living in lone parent families increased by two percentage points to 24 per cent.

In 2010, 46 per cent of families with dependent children had only one dependent child in the family at the time of the survey, an increase of four percentage points since 2001. In 2010, 39 per cent of families with dependent children had two dependent children and 15 per cent had three or more dependent children.

¹ The figures for civil partner couple and same sex cohabiting couple families are not considered reliable for practical purposes

Figure 1: Percentage of dependent children:¹ by family type in 2001 and 2010

United Kingdom



¹ Less than 1 per cent of dependent children lived in civil partner and same sex cohabiting couple families in 2010. Therefore the percentages are too small to be shown in Figure 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

Household size

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). A household can consist of more than one family.

There were 26.0 million households in the UK in 2010. The number of households has increased by 6.1 per cent since 2001, slightly faster than the 4.5 per cent growth in the size of the UK population over the same period. This is due to the trend towards smaller household sizes: the proportion of households containing four or more people decreased from 20.7 per cent in 2001 to 19.8 in 2010, while the proportion of households containing one person increased from 28.6 per cent to 29.0, or over 500,000, over the same period.

Household type

Table 2 shows that the most common household type in 2010 was one family, consisting of a couple with or without children. There were 14.6 million such households, which represented 56 per cent of all households. This is an increase from 14.2 million households in 2001, but a reduction from 58 per cent of all households. The next most common household type was one person households, of which there were 7.5 million in 2010. Households containing one lone parent family increased by 0.4 million to 2.8 million in 2010.

Table 2: Households: by household type in 2001 and 2010

United Kingdom						Millions
Year	One person households	One family household: couple	One family household: lone parent	Two or more unrelated adults	Multi-family households	All households
2001	7.0	14.2	2.4	0.7	0.2	24.5
2010	7.5	14.6	2.8	0.8	0.2	26.0

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

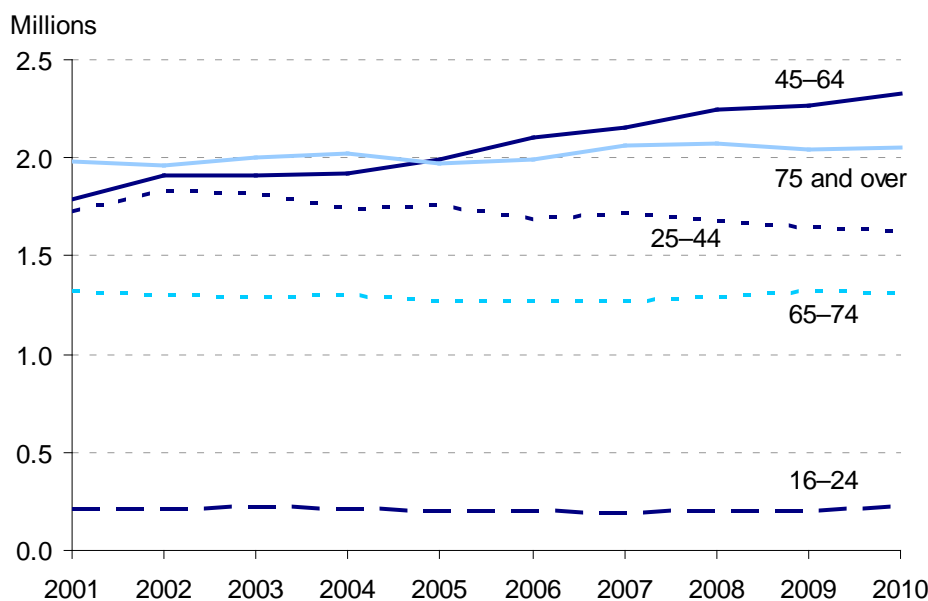
Living alone

In 2010, 7.5 million people in UK households lived alone, of which 3.4 million were aged 65 and over. Of these, 70 per cent were female, whereas only 42 per cent of those living alone aged under 65 were female.

Figure 2 shows the trends in the number of people living alone by age group between 2001 and 2010. The largest change is in the 45–64 age group, where the number of people living alone increased by 31 per cent between 2001 and 2010. This is partly due to the increasing population aged 45–64 in the UK over the last decade, as the 1960s baby boom generation have been starting to reach this age group. The increase in those living alone also coincides with a decrease in the percentage of those in this age group who are married, and a rise in the percentage of those aged 45–64 who have never married, or are divorced.

Figure 2: People living alone: by age group, 2001 to 2010

United Kingdom



Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

Background Notes

1. More data on families and households, and a Summary Quality Report of these statistics, can be found at: www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=1614
 2. The Social Trends 'Households and Families' chapter is also published today at: www.statistics.gov.uk/ci/article.asp?ID=2665
 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. 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.
 5. A small number of dependent children are excluded from the analysis on families. These include foster children and children who live in communal establishments which are not covered by the Labour Force Survey.
 6. 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).
 7. 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 from the link in note 1.
 8. Further information about the Labour Force Survey can be found at: www.ons.gov.uk/about/who-we-are/our-services/unpublished-data/social-survey-data/lfs
 9. This is the first time that estimates of families and households have been provided in this format. The Office for National Statistics would appreciate feedback on the uses made and usefulness of the information provided. Please email families@ons.gov.uk or use the contacts listed below.
 10. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the Media Relations Office.
 11. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.
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Office for National Statistics, Government Buildings, Cardiff Road, Newport NP10 8XG

Media contact:

Tel: Media Relations Office 0845 6041858
Emergency on-call 07867 906553

Email: media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk

Statistical contact:

Tel: Julie Jefferies 01329 444677

Email: families@ons.gov.uk

Website: www.ons.gov.uk