

Survey shows proportion of one-parent households tripled over 40 years

A report published today to mark 40 years of the General Lifestyle Survey shows the proportion of one-parent households tripled over four decades.

The 2011 General Lifestyle Survey Overview report by the Office for National Statistics reveals how society changed between 1971 and 2011. The data shows:

- Over four decades, household size declined from 2.91 persons to 2.35.
- The proportion of one-parent households tripled, and the proportion of families with only one dependent child increased by around a third.
- The proportion of adults living alone almost doubled over the period, with the increase occurring in the first 30 years (between 1973 to 1998). Adults aged 25-44 were five times more likely to be living alone in 2011 (10%) than they were in 1973 (2%).
- Over the last 30 years the proportion of women who were married has fallen by a third while the proportion cohabiting has tripled.
- During the first 20 years of the survey (1972 to 1991) the proportion of people reporting a long-standing illness or disability increased from two-fifths to a third of all people, but has remained relatively stable since.
- Although cigarette smoking has halved over the last 37 years (from 45% in 1974 to 20% in 2011) the number of cigarettes smoked by men and women has changed little since the early 1980's.
- The proportion of men and women drinking on 5 or more days a week fell from 23% of men in 1998 to 16% in 2011 and from 13% to 9% of women. Men and women aged 45 and over are more likely to drink on 5 or more days a week than younger people.
- The proportion of households with a telephone (landline or mobile) has increased from less than half 40 years ago to almost all households by 2011.
- Similarly, by 2011, 98% of households had central heating compared to 37% in 1972.
- Forty years ago only half of all households had access to a car or van, in 2011 this had increased to three-quarters. Over the 40 years households with access to a single car or van has remained similar, but the proportion of households with access to multiple cars has trebled.
- Access to a computer has risen continuously between 1984 and 2011, from 9% of households to 80%.

In 1971 the General Household Survey (GHS) was created to be a wide ranging Government service to gather information covering several main themes at the same time. These themes have remained constant over the 40 years of the survey:

- Population
- Housing
- Employment
- Education
- Health

Over the past 40 years the survey has monitored changes in the demographic, social and economic characteristics of households, families and people in Great Britain.

Also published today is [An overview of 40 years of data \(General Lifestyle Survey Overview - a report on the 2011 General Lifestyle Survey\)](#).

Background notes

1. The [General Lifestyle Survey, 2011](#) presents information on a range of topics from people living in private households in Great Britain.
2. Issued by: Office for National Statistics, Government Buildings, Cardiff Road, Newport NP10 8XG

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