Introduction

Croeso (welcome) to the 39th edition of *Social Trends*, one of the flagship publications from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). *Social Trends* provides an up to date and comprehensive description of society, drawing on statistics from a wide range of government departments and other organisations to show how society is changing, as well as some of the factors which may be driving these trends.

Social Trends is aimed at a wide audience: policy makers in the public and private sectors, service providers, people in local government, journalists and other commentators, academics and students, schools, and the general public.

What's new?

In response to user feedback, this edition of *Social Trends* has undergone several changes. The Overview section has again been used, to highlight at a glance some of the key and emerging trends in today's society. This year's theme, 'households, families and children' has been supported by an article to help explain the definitions, terminology, and different levels of analysis relating to households, families and children. We are also committed to publishing high professional standard statistics and have revisited the list of figures and tables to include information on the status of the statistics included in this edition; National Statistics or Non-National Statistics. You may also have noticed that the insert colour for this edition of *Social Trends* is blue, replacing the red used in previous editions. This style change brings *Social Trends* in line with other ONS 'social' publications. Your views on these changes and continued suggestions on how *Social Trends* could be improved are welcomed. Please write to the Editor at the address shown below with your comments.

New material, definitions and terms

Each year, to preserve topicality around one-third of data used in *Social Trends* is new. The remainder, where possible have been carried forward from previous editions and updated.

Due to variations in coverage and definitions, some care may be needed when comparing data from more than one source. Anyone seeking to understand the figures and tables in detail will find it helpful to read the Appendix and Symbols and conventions pages towards the end of the book. A list of further reading and websites is also provided.

Availability on electronic media

Social Trends 39 is available electronically on the National Statistics website, www.statistics.gov.uk/socialtrends. The full report is available as an interactive PDF file where excel spreadsheets containing the data used in the publication can be accessed and downloaded by clicking on the relevant chart or table.

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In this year's edition...

- **Threefold increase in the population aged 90 and over in Great Britain.**
The number of people aged 90 and over in Great Britain increased from around 125,000 in 1971 to around 417,000 in 2007.
- **Rise in early years education.**
Between 1970/71 and 2007/08 the proportion of three and four-year-olds enrolled in schools in the UK tripled from 21 per cent to 64 per cent.
- **Employment rates are lowest for lone mothers with a child aged under five.**
In Q2 2008, 35 per cent of lone mothers in the UK with a child aged under five were working, compared with 63 per cent for those with a partner.
- **More than three-fifths of children immunised against measles, mumps and rubella.**
In 2006/07, 86 per cent of children in the UK were immunised against measles, mumps and rubella.
- **Grandparents are a common source of child care for working mothers.**
In 2006, 40 per cent of children with working mothers in Great Britain relied on informal child care: the most common source was the child's grandparents.

- High incidence of personal crime among young people.**
 In 2006, more than one-quarter of young people aged under 26 in England and Wales were victims of personal crime in the previous 12 months.
- Fall in residential property transactions.**
 The number of residential property transactions per month in the UK halved between January and November 2008, from 104,000 to 52,000.
- Rise in energy generation from renewable sources.**
 The proportion of electricity generated from renewable sources accounted for around 5 per cent of all electricity generated in the UK in 2007.
- Record pump prices for premium unleaded petrol and diesel.**
 The average prices of premium unleaded petrol and diesel in the UK reached a peak in July 2008, at 119.6 pence per litre and 133.0 pence per litre respectively.
- Increase in holiday trips taken in Europe.**
 Between 2003 and 2007, holiday trips by UK residents to Latvia increased from 4,000 to around 50,000.