

Households and families

- An increasing trend towards smaller household sizes has seen the average household size in Great Britain fall from 3.1 people per household in 1961 to 2.4 people in Q2 2009. ([Table 2.1](#))
- The proportion of dependent children in the UK living with married parents fell from almost three-quarters (72 per cent) in Q2 1997 to less than two-thirds (63 per cent) in Q2 2009. ([Table 2.5](#))
- The number of marriages in England and Wales fell for the third consecutive year in 2007, to around 231,500. ([Figure 2.11](#))
- There were around 128,500 divorces in England and Wales in 2007, a fall of 3 per cent compared with 2006. This was the fourth fall in succession and is the lowest number of divorces in a single year since 1976. ([Figure 2.15](#))
- Since the 1970s, there has been a fall in the proportion of babies born to women aged under 25 in England and Wales, from 47 per cent (369,600 live births) in 1971 to 25 per cent (180,700 live births) in 2008. ([Figure 2.16](#))
- In 2007, the average age of women in England and Wales at their first childbirth (27.5 years) was below the average age at first marriage (29.8 years), as has been the case since 1992. ([Figure 2.17](#))



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Home life, partnerships and other social relationships are important influences on personal development and well-being. Trends in household and family formation are of particular interest to policy makers, for example in determining educational or housing requirements. Traditionally most people in the UK have shared living arrangements for much of their life. However, over the past few decades, changes in social legislation, attitudes, and the age profile of the population have led to new structures and characteristics of households and families. More people spend time living on their own, whether before, after, or instead of marriage or cohabitation. This chapter looks at all of these changes and explores aspects of households and families in the UK.

Household composition

Households are defined, broadly, as people who live and eat together, or people who live alone. Families are defined by marriage, civil partnership or cohabitation and, where there are children in the household, child/parent relationships. Most households consist of a single family or someone living alone. The first section of this chapter looks at people living in private households, and so those living in institutions such as care homes, prisons, hospitals and other communal establishments are not included in the results.

There were 25.2 million households in Great Britain in Q2 (April to June) 2009, an increase of 8.9 million (55 per cent) since 1961 (Table 2.1). Although the population has increased considerably over this time (see Population chapter, Table 1.1),

Table 2.1
Households:¹ by size

Great Britain	Percentages					
	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001 ²	2009 ²
One person	14	18	22	27	29	29
Two people	30	32	32	34	35	35
Three people	23	19	17	16	16	16
Four people	18	17	18	16	14	14
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	25.2
Average household size (number of people)	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.4	2.4

1 See Appendix, Part 2: Households, Families, and Multi-sourced tables.
2 Data are at Q2 (April–June) each year and are not seasonally adjusted. See Appendix, Part 4: Labour Force Survey.

Source: Census, Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

the number of households has grown faster because of an increasing trend towards smaller household sizes. This is reflected in the fall in the average household size in Great Britain from 3.1 people per household in 1961 to 2.4 people per household in Q2 2009. Reasons for this increase in household numbers, and the fall in household size, include more lone parent families, smaller family sizes and, in particular, more one person households. However, the rise in one person households has levelled off in recent years. As a proportion of all households, one person households increased by 13 percentage points between 1961 and 1991, by a further 2 percentage points between 1991 and Q2 2001, and has since remained stable.

Over the same time period, there has been a marked fall in the proportion of households comprising six or more people. In 1961, 7 per cent of all households in Great Britain were home to at least six people. By 1991, this had fallen to 2 per cent, a proportion that has since remained stable.

In Northern Ireland there were estimated to be around 693,000 households in 2008–09 and the average household size was 2.5 people per household, compared with 2.7 people per household in 1998–99. More than a quarter (28 per cent) of households in Northern Ireland were home to just one person in 2008–09. Between 1998–99 and 2004–05 the proportion of large family households, comprising six or more people, fell from 5 per cent to 3 per cent, and has since remained stable.

In Q2 2009 the most common type of household in Great Britain was a couple family household, which accounted for more than half (56 per cent) of all households (Table 2.2). However, there has been a decline in the proportion of households containing a 'traditional' family unit – couple families with dependent children (children aged under 16 and those aged 16 to 18 who have never married and are in full-time education). In 1961, 38 per cent of households comprised couple families with dependent children but by Q2 2009 this had fallen to 21 per cent. Over the same period, the proportion of households comprising one person under state pension age (65 for men and 60 for women) increased more than threefold, from 4 per cent in 1961 to 14 per cent in Q2 2009. The proportion of households headed by one person over state pension age doubled between 1961 and 1981, and rose a further 2 percentage points between 1981 and 1991. By Q2 2009, the proportion of these older one person households had fallen back to 14 per cent.

Couple family households also accounted for 56 per cent of all households in Northern Ireland in 2008–09. Couple families with dependent children accounted for almost a quarter

Table 2.2
Households:¹ by type of household and family

Great Britain	Percentages					
	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001 ²	2009 ²
One person households						
Under state pension age ³	4	6	8	11	14	14
Over state pension age ³	7	12	14	16	15	14
One family households						
Couple ⁴						
No children	26	27	26	28	29	29
1–2 dependent children ^{5,6}	30	26	25	20	19	18
3 or more dependent children ^{5,6}	8	9	6	5	4	3
Non-dependent children only	10	8	8	8	6	6
Lone parent ⁴						
Dependent children ^{5,6}	2	3	5	6	7	7
Non-dependent children only	4	4	4	4	3	3
Two or more unrelated adults	5	4	5	3	3	3
Multi-family households	3	1	1	1	1	1
All households						
(=100%) (millions)	16.3	18.6	20.2	22.4	23.9	25.2

- 1 See Appendix, Part 2: Households, Families, and Multi-sourced tables.
 2 Data are at Q2 (April–June) each year and are not seasonally adjusted. See Appendix, Part 4: Labour Force Survey.
 3 State pension age is currently 65 for men and 60 for women.
 4 These households may contain individuals who are not family members. Couples data for 2009 include a small number of same-sex couples and civil partners.
 5 Children aged under 16 and those aged 16 to 18 who have never married and are in full-time education.
 6 These families may also contain non-dependent children.

Source: Census, Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

(24 per cent) of all households, a fall of 4 percentage points since 1998–99. The proportion of one person households has remained broadly stable over the last 10 years, at around 27 per cent. In 2008–09, 14 per cent of these households comprised one adult over state pension age and 13 per cent comprised one adult below state pension age.

In Q2 2009, 59.2 million people lived in private households in Great Britain (Table 2.3 overleaf). The remainder of the population lived in one of a range of communal establishments, for example, prisons, hospitals and care homes, and hotels (live-in staff). For further information see Appendix, Part 4: Labour Force Survey.

The data in Table 2.2 showed that over half (56 per cent) of households were headed by a couple in Q2 2009, whereas Table 2.3 is based on people in households. It shows that over

Reference persons

Though the majority of households contain one family, some households contain multiple families, while others do not contain a family at all (for example, where the household consists of only one person or unrelated adults). This chapter mainly refers to data based on the household reference person although some data are based on the family reference person. The UK Census 2001 defined household reference person and family reference person as follows:

Household reference person (HRP)

A person living alone is the HRP. If the household contains one family, the HRP is the same as the family reference person (FRP, see below). If there is more than one family in the household, the HRP is chosen from the FRPs using the same criteria as for choosing the FRP. If there is no family, the HRP is chosen from the individuals living in the household using the same criteria.

Family reference person (FRP)

In a couple family the FRP is chosen from the two people in the couple on the basis of their economic activity in priority order of full-time job, part-time job, unemployed, retired, other. If both have the same economic activity, the FRP is defined as the elder of the two, or if they are the same age, the first member of the couple listed on the census form. In a lone parent family the FRP is the lone parent.

two-thirds (70 per cent) of people living in private households lived in couple family households in Q2 2009. However, between 1961 and Q2 2009 the proportion of people living in the 'traditional' family household of a couple with dependent children has fallen from just over half (52 per cent) to just over a third (36 per cent), while the proportion of people living in couple family households with no children increased from almost a fifth (18 per cent) in 1961 to a quarter (25 per cent) in Q2 2001, and has remained stable since.

The proportion of people living in lone parent households doubled between 1961 and 1981 (from 3 per cent to 6 per cent) and doubled again between 1981 and Q2 2009 (from 6 per cent to 12 per cent). Between 1961 and Q2 2009 the proportion of people living in other households, including multi-family households and households with unrelated adults only, halved from 12 per cent to 6 per cent.

Earlier in this section, the increase in the proportion of people living alone was highlighted as one of the most noticeable changes in household composition over the past few decades. The number of one person households increased from around 1.7 million in 1961 to more than 7 million in Q2 2009.

Table 2.3
People in households:¹ by type of household and family

Great Britain	Percentages					
	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001 ²	2009 ²
One person households	4	6	8	11	12	12
One family households						
Couple						
No children	18	19	20	23	25	25
Dependent children ³	52	52	47	41	38	36
Non-dependent children only	12	10	10	11	9	9
Lone parent ⁴	3	4	6	10	11	12
Other households⁵	12	9	9	4	5	6
All people in private households (=100%) (millions)	49.5	53.4	53.9	54.1	56.7	59.2

1 See Appendix, Part 2: Households, Families, and Multi-sourced tables.
 2 Data are at Q2 (April–June) each year and are not seasonally adjusted. See Appendix, Part 4: Labour Force Survey.
 3 Children aged under 16 and those aged 16 to 18 who have never married and are in full-time education.
 4 Includes those with dependent children only, non-dependent children only and those with both dependent and non-dependent children.
 5 Includes same-sex couples and civil partners for 2009.

Source: Census, Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

However, the percentage increase has not been uniform across all ages, or by sex. Data from the General Household Survey (see Appendix, Part 2: General Household Survey) show that older women were the most likely to be living alone in Great Britain in 2007, 61 per cent of women aged 75 and over,

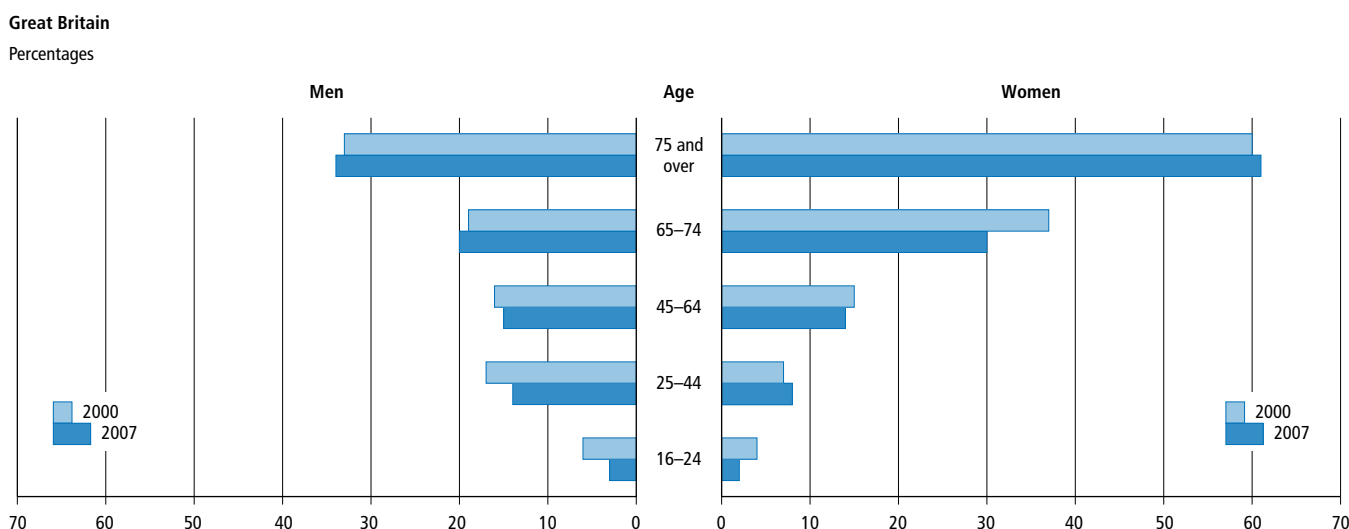
compared with 34 per cent of men in the same age group (Figure 2.4). In recent years, the proportion of younger people living alone has halved, from 6 per cent of men and 4 per cent of women aged 16 to 24 in 2000, to 3 per cent and 2 per cent respectively in 2007.

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. In Q2 2009 there were around 13 million dependent children living with at least one parent in the UK. More than three-quarters (76 per cent) of these children, equivalent to over 10 million children, lived with two parents (Table 2.5). The proportion of dependent children living with two parents fell during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s: from 92 per cent in 1972, to 88 per cent in 1981 and to 83 per cent by 1992. In Q2 2001, 78 per cent of dependent children lived with two parents, a figure that has remained fairly stable since.

Almost 8.3 million dependent children (63 per cent) lived with married parents in the UK in Q2 2009 and around 1.7 million (13 per cent) lived with cohabiting parents. In comparison, 9.6 million children (72 per cent) lived with married parents in Q2 1997 and 1.0 million (8 per cent) lived with cohabiting parents.

The number of families with dependent children in the UK in Q2 2009 was around 7.6 million. Of these, 4.6 million (61 per cent) were married couple families. The second most common type was families headed by a lone mother (1.8 million), followed by cohabiting couple families (1.0 million) and lone father families (0.2 million).

Figure 2.4
People living alone: by sex and age



Source: General Household Survey, Office for National Statistics

Table 2.5
Dependent children¹ and their families²

United Kingdom	Millions				
	1997	2001	2005	2008	2009
Number of dependent children: by family type					
Married couple ³	9.6	9.0	8.6	8.3	8.3
Cohabiting couple ⁴	1.0	1.3	1.5	1.7	1.7
Female lone parent	2.5	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.9
Male lone parent	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3
Number of families with dependent children					
Married couple ³	5.1	4.8	4.7	4.6	4.6
Cohabiting couple ⁴	0.6	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.0
Female lone parent	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.8
Male lone parent	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2

- 1 Children aged under 16 and those aged 16 to 18 who have never married and are in full-time education. See Appendix, Part 2: Families.
- 2 Data are at Q2 (April–June) each year and are not seasonally adjusted. See Appendix, Part 4: Labour Force Survey.
- 3 Data for 2008 onwards include civil partnerships.
- 4 Data for 2008 onwards include same-sex couples.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

In Q2 2009, married couple families with dependent children had an average of 1.8 dependent children living with them. Cohabiting couples with dependent children had an average of 1.7 dependent children. The figure for lone mothers was 1.6 dependent children whereas for lone fathers it was 1.4 dependent children.

Children live in an increasing variety of family structures during their lives. If their parents separate they will typically start to live in a lone parent family or a stepfamily. Stepfamilies are formed when an adult with a child (or children) lives in a partnership with someone who is not the parent of their child (or children). This can happen after the death of a spouse or partner but is more common after divorce or separation. In most cases, stepfamilies comprise a natural mother and a stepfather (86 per cent of stepfamilies in Great Britain in 2007) because it is usual for children to remain with the mother following a relationship breakdown (Table 2.6). In Great Britain in 2007, 10 per cent of stepfamilies comprised a natural father and a stepmother and around 4 per cent of stepfamilies were formed by two adults who both had one or more stepchildren in the household.

There has been a considerable increase in the proportion of families headed by a lone mother since 1971, when 7 per cent of families with dependent children in Great Britain were lone mother families, compared with 20 per cent in 2007. The marital status of these lone parents has changed markedly over

Table 2.6
Stepfamilies¹ with dependent children²

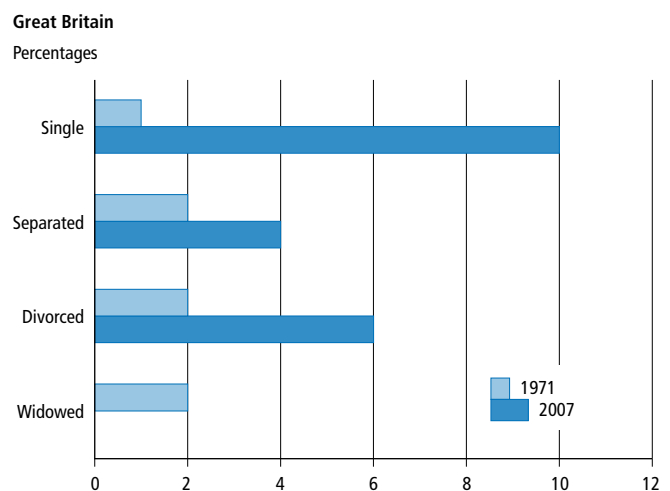
Great Britain	Percentages				
	1991/92	1996/97	2000/01	2005 ³	2007
Child(ren) from the woman's previous marriage/cohabitation	86	84	88	86	86
Child(ren) from the man's previous marriage/cohabitation	6	12	9	11	10
Child(ren) from both partners' previous marriage/cohabitation	6	4	3	3	4
Lone parent with child(ren) from a previous partner's marriage/cohabitation	1	-	-	-	-
All stepfamilies	100	100	100	100	100

- 1 Family reference person aged 16 to 59. See Appendix, Part 2: General Household Survey.
- 2 Children aged under 16, or aged 16 to 18 and in full-time education, in the family unit, and living in the household.
- 3 In 2005 General Household Survey data collection changed from financial to calendar year.

Source: General Household Survey, Office for National Statistics

this time. In 1971, only 1 per cent of families with dependent children were single (never-married) lone mothers, but by 2007 this proportion had risen to 10 per cent (Figure 2.7). These single lone parents may or may not have previously been in a

Figure 2.7
Lone mother families with dependent children:¹ by marital status



- 1 Children aged under 16, or aged 16 to 18 and in full-time education, in the family unit, and living in the household.

Source: General Household Survey, Office for National Statistics

cohabiting relationship with the father of their child (or children). In 1971, 2 per cent of families with dependent children were headed by widowed lone mothers but by 2007 this proportion fell to less than 0.5 per cent (rounded to zero). This trend probably shows a fall in lone mother families created by the death of a male partner (although the mother may have become a lone parent after becoming widowed). Between 1971 and 2007, there was a large increase in the proportion of families with dependent children that were separated or divorced lone mothers. The proportion that were separated lone mothers doubled (from 2 per cent to 4 per cent), and the proportion that were divorced lone mothers tripled (from 2 per cent to 6 per cent). Lone father families with dependent

children accounted for 3 per cent of all families with dependent children in 2007.

Household size and composition vary across ethnic groups. Demographic traditions and socio-economic characteristics of the ethnic groups in the UK underlie many of these differences. In Q2 2009, 86 per cent of dependent children from the Asian or Asian British ethnic group were living in married couple families (894,000 children). This compares with 62 per cent of dependent children from a White background (6.7 million children), 74 per cent of children from the Chinese group (25,000 children), and 78 per cent of children from the Other ethnic group (181,000 children) (Table 2.8). Fewer than half of

Table 2.8
Dependent children:¹ by family type and ethnic group^{2,3}

United Kingdom	Thousands				
	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009
Married couple⁴					
White	7,863	7,637	7,313	7,061	6,717
Mixed	125	126	151	167	188
Asian or Asian British	620	659	693	752	894
Black or Black British	131	148	152	215	196
Chinese	33	23	33	36	25
Other ethnic group	45	108	142	148	181
Total dependent children with married parents ⁵	8,997	8,772	8,577	8,441	8,290
Cohabiting couple⁶					
White	1,256	1,300	1,383	1,492	1,567
Mixed	27	26	29	50	55
Asian or Asian British	3	7	2	5	7
Black or Black British	26	19	24	26	22
Chinese	2	*	*	2	3
Other ethnic group	*	4	5	7	12
Total dependent children with cohabiting parents ⁵	1,339	1,366	1,455	1,597	1,682
Lone parent					
White	2,418	2,557	2,474	2,424	2,496
Mixed	127	128	133	134	150
Asian or Asian British	94	81	107	134	143
Black or Black British	198	206	206	240	279
Chinese	12	9	6	10	6
Other ethnic group	5	24	47	73	40
Total dependent children with lone parents ⁵	2,900	3,020	2,995	3,028	3,146

1 Children aged under 16 and those aged 16 to 18 who have never married and are in full-time education.

2 See Appendix, Part 1: Classification of ethnic groups.

3 Data are at Q2 (April–June) each year and are not seasonally adjusted. See Appendix, Part 4: Labour Force Survey.

4 Data for 2007 onwards include civil partnerships.

5 Includes those who did not know or state their ethnicity.

6 Data for 2007 onwards include same-sex couples.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

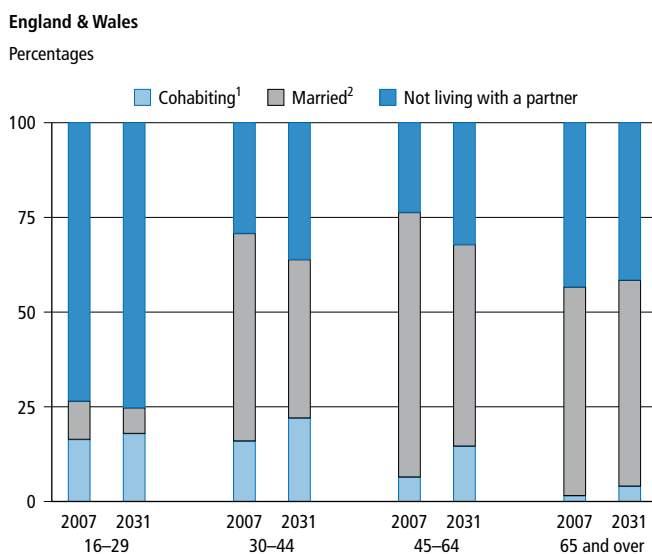
all children in the Mixed (48 per cent) and Black or Black British (39 per cent) groups lived with married parents (188,000 children and 196,000 children respectively).

More than half of Black or Black British dependent children lived with a lone parent (56 per cent) in Q2 2009, a similar proportion as reported in 2001. Children from the Asian or Asian British group were least likely to live with a lone parent, at just 14 per cent of all dependent children in this group. The proportion of Asian or Asian British children living with lone parents was similar to 2001 (13 per cent) but the proportion of White children living with lone parents had risen since 2001, when it was 21 per cent of all children in this group, compared to 23 per cent in Q2 2009.

Partnerships

In 2007, the majority of the adult population in England and Wales were living as part of a couple, either cohabiting or married. Types of partnership vary according to age group, although by far the most common partnership type was marriage. More than half (55 per cent) of adults aged 30 and over were married in 2007. Adults aged 16 to 29 were the least likely age group to be living with a partner: 10 per cent were married and 16 per cent were cohabiting (Figure 2.9). In comparison, almost three-quarters (71 per cent) of adults aged 30 to 44 and just over three-quarters (76 per cent) of adults aged 45 to 64 were living with a partner, either as a married or cohabiting couple. In the older age group, people aged 65 and

Figure 2.9
Population: by partnership status and age



1 Includes people who are separated and cohabiting.
2 Includes people who are separated but not cohabiting; projections are not available for this group.

Source: Office for National Statistics

Table 2.10
Cohabiting population:¹ by marital status and sex, 2007²

England & Wales	Percentages	
	Men	Women
Never married	72	74
Separated	3	2
Widowed	1	2
Divorced	24	21

1 Aged 16 and over.
2 2006-based estimates, incorporating estimates of the population cohabiting at mid-2007. See Appendix, Part 1: Population estimates and projections.

Source: Office for National Statistics

over, more than half (55 per cent) were married and less than 2 per cent were cohabiting.

The proportion of opposite-sex couples (either married or cohabiting) is projected to fall for most age groups over the next 25 years. However, expected improvements in life expectancy are projected to impact upon the proportion of adults who are currently living as part of a couple, leading to an increase in the proportion of married and cohabiting adults aged 65 and over in 2031. Overall, the number of cohabiting couples in England and Wales is projected to rise by almost two-thirds, from 2.25 million in 2007 to 3.70 million in 2031.

It is estimated that in 2007, around 10 per cent of the population aged 16 and over in England and Wales were cohabiting (4.5 million adults) and that the majority of cohabiting adults (72 per cent of men and 74 per cent of women) had never married (Table 2.10). Most of the remainder were divorced (24 per cent of cohabiting men and 21 per cent of cohabiting women).

Almost a fifth (19 per cent) of women aged between 16 and 30 were cohabiting compared with 14 per cent of men in the same age group in 2007. Of the men who were cohabiting, the largest proportion (42 per cent) were aged between 31 and 45, whereas female cohabitants tended to be younger: 45 per cent of women cohabiting in England and Wales in 2007 were aged between 16 and 30.

Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 showed estimates of households and families at a given point in time, but another consideration is the stability of household and family types over time. Changes in family type can occur because of partnership dissolution. A cohabitation separation causes a family change and marks the end of a cohabiting partnership. It only measures the flow of cohabiting couples who stop living together, and not when a

cohabiting couple marry each other. In 2007, around 1 in 10 married (or civil partnered) adults aged between 16 and 59 had ever experienced a cohabitation separation (prior to their current partnership). In comparison, 1 in 5 cohabiting adults (of the same age) had experienced a cohabitation separation (not including their current cohabitation). In part this difference may be explained by the fact that younger people are both more likely to be currently cohabiting and to have experienced a cohabitation separation in the past. Divorced adults aged between 16 and 59 were also more likely than married adults to have experienced cohabitation separation at some point in their lives, while widowed adults were the least likely to have ever experienced cohabitation separation. Again, it is likely that age and generational differences explain some of this variation.

Marriage and divorce are two further types of family transition. The number of marriages in England and Wales fell for the third consecutive year in 2007, to 231,500 (Figure 2.11). With the exception of an increase between 2002 and 2004, there has been a steady decline since the early 1970s and this was the lowest number of marriages recorded in a single year in England and Wales since 1895 when there were just over 228,000 marriages.

The number of first marriages (first for both partners) in England and Wales has decreased substantially since the peak of 340,000 in 1970, equivalent to 82 per cent of all marriages registered that year. First marriages fell below three-quarters (73 per cent) of all marriages in 1972 and continued to decline, reaching a low of 58 per cent in 1996. However, in 2007 there

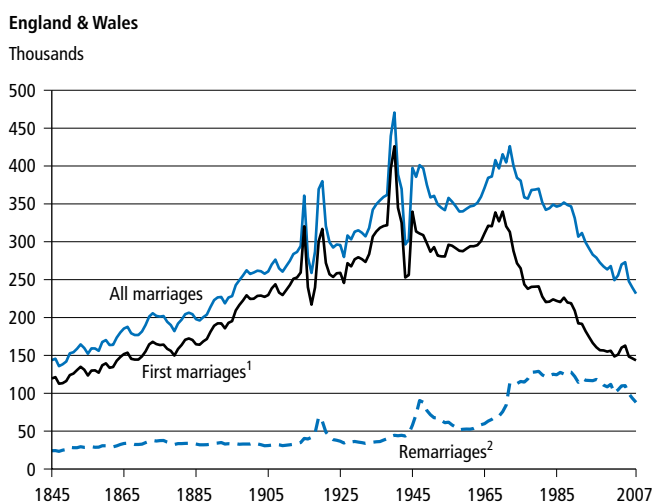
were around 143,000 first marriages, which accounted for almost two-thirds (62 per cent) of all marriages. The last time the proportion of marriages that were first marriages was this high was in 1992.

Almost 29,900 marriages were registered in Scotland in 2007. The highest number of marriages registered in Scotland in a single year was just over 53,500 in 1940. The lowest since records began was in 1858 when just under 19,700 marriages were registered.

In Northern Ireland there were 8,500 marriages registered in 2008, which was a decrease of around 2 per cent on the previous year. The highest number of marriages ever recorded in Northern Ireland was in 1970 (12,300 marriages). Since then, the number of marriages taking place in Northern Ireland has declined, and reached a low of 7,300 in 2001. In 2008, four-fifths (80 per cent) of marriages were first marriages for both partners and 7 per cent were remarriages for both partners.

Of the 231,500 marriages that were registered in England and Wales in 2007, a third (33 per cent) were religious marriages (Table 2.12). Of all religious ceremonies, 72 per cent were Church of England and Church in Wales, around 1 in 10 (11 per cent) were Roman Catholic, just under 1 in 10 (9 per cent) were nonconformist, and around 1 in 20 (4 per cent) were other types of Christian ceremony such as Presbyterian, Society of Friends (Quakers), Salvation Army,

Figure 2.11
Marriages: by previous marital status



1 For both parties.
2 For one or both parties.
Source: Office for National Statistics

Table 2.12
Marriages: by type of ceremony

England & Wales	Thousands			
	1981	1991	2001	2007
Civil ceremonies	172.5	151.3	160.2	154.0
in approved premises	.	.	50.1	99.8
Religious ceremonies	179.5	155.4	89.0	77.5
Church of England/Church in Wales	118.4	102.8	60.9	55.9
Roman Catholic	26.1	19.6	10.5	8.8
Nonconformist ¹	29.0	25.5	11.2	6.6
Other Christian bodies ²	4.4	5.6	4.0	3.4
Other ³	1.5	2.0	2.4	2.8
All ceremonies	352.0	306.8	249.2	231.5

1 Includes Methodist, Calvinistic Methodist, United Reformed Church, Congregationalist and Baptist.
2 Includes Presbyterian, Society of Friends (Quakers), Salvation Army, Brethren and Jehovah's Witnesses.
3 Includes Jewish, Muslim and Sikh.

Source: Office for National Statistics

Brethren and Jehovah's Witnesses. The remaining 4 per cent (2,800 ceremonies) were other religious ceremonies including Jewish, Muslim and Sikh marriages.

The proportion of religious marriages fell from just over half (51 per cent) of all marriages in 1981 to around a third (33 per cent) in 2007. During this period, the number of Church of England/Church in Wales marriages has more than halved, although they have increased from 66 per cent to 72 per cent of all religious marriages. Roman Catholic marriages, which accounted for 15 per cent of religious marriages in 1981, fell by around two-thirds and, in 2007, accounted for 11 per cent of religious marriages. The number of Other marriages, for example, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh marriages almost doubled, from 1,500 in 1981 to 2,800 in 2007.

Over four-fifths (81 per cent) of religious ceremonies in 2007 were first marriages for both partners compared with just over half (53 per cent) for civil ceremonies. Nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of civil marriages were remarriages for both partners, compared with 7 per cent of religious marriages.

In Scotland, just over half (52 per cent) of marriages were civil ceremonies in 2007. Just over a quarter (26 per cent) were Church of Scotland ceremonies and the remainder were other denominations. In Northern Ireland, 71 per cent of marriages in 2008 were religious marriages, a much higher proportion than in the rest of Great Britain. Although the number of civil marriages in Northern Ireland is low compared with England, Wales and Scotland, the popularity of the civil ceremony has

been increasing over the longer term. Civil marriages accounted for 7 per cent of all marriages in 1928 and 14 per cent in 1988.

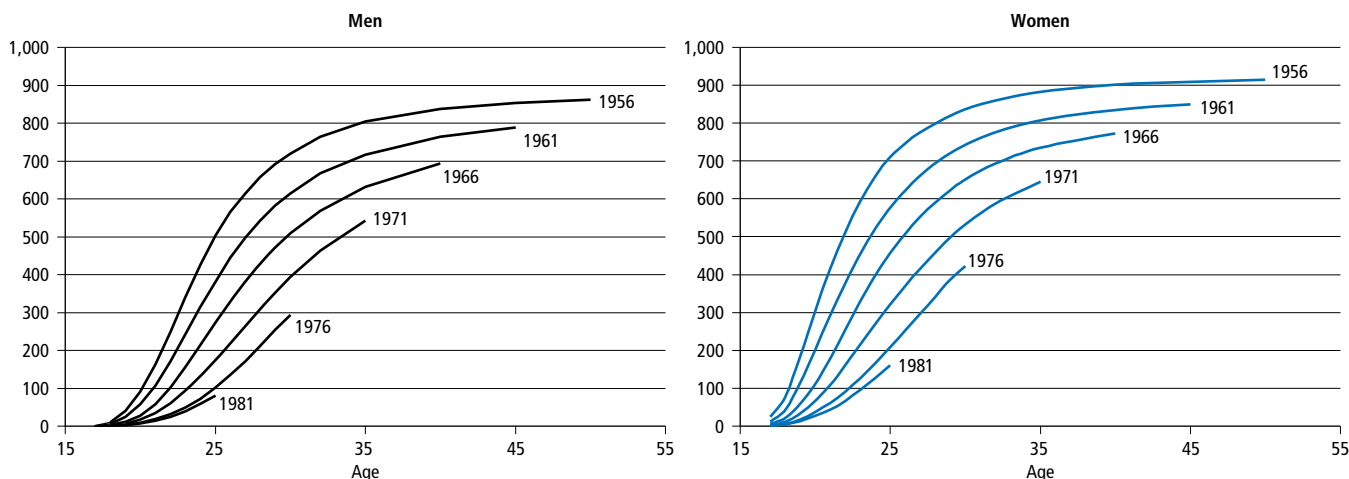
According to the 2006 British Social Attitudes Survey, more than two-thirds of people believe that they did not need a partner to be happy and fulfilled in life. Falling marriage rates and an increasing number of cohabiting couples partly reflect differences between generations in addition to differences between age groups. For men born in 1956, the proportion who had ever married by age 25 was 50 per cent (503 men for every 1,000 born in 1956). Women in this generation were even more likely to have married by age 25: the equivalent proportion was 71 per cent (710 women for every 1,000 born in 1956) (Figure 2.13).

By comparison, younger generations are much less likely to have ever been married, particularly at younger ages. This reflects both a delay and a decline in marriage. For men born in 1981, 8 per cent had married by the time they were 25. For women the equivalent figure was 16 per cent.

It is difficult to compare different generations because a complete partnership history for each generation will only become available as the people in each generation come towards the end of their lives. Nevertheless, Figure 2.13 indicates that there has been a smaller proportion of ever married adults in each successive generation when comparing the proportion at every age. It remains to be seen whether younger generations will catch up with older generations in the proportion that have ever married by the end of their lives.

Figure 2.13
Proportion of adults¹ ever married: by age and year of birth²

England & Wales
Rates per 1,000 population



1 Aged 16 and over.
2 Each line is a birth cohort (year of birth).

Source: Office for National Statistics

Some catching up might be expected as the average age at marriage continues to rise.

The highest number of civil partnerships registered in the UK was in December 2005 (1,953), when the *Civil Partnership Act 2004* came into force (see Appendix, Part 2: Civil partnership) (Figure 2.14). The artificially high number of partnerships formed in this month, and throughout the following 12 months, reflected the number of same-sex couples in long-term relationships who took advantage of the opportunity to formalise their relationship as soon as possible after the legislation was implemented. There were a total of 7,169 civil partnerships registered in the UK in 2008, a fall of 18 per cent on the previous year.

A fall in the number of civil partnership registrations was recorded in all four countries of the UK. The largest annual fall was in Scotland (24 per cent) where 525 partnerships were registered in 2008 followed by Northern Ireland (23 per cent) where 86 partnerships were registered. England accounted for around 88 per cent (6,276) of all civil partnerships formed in the UK, a fall of 18 per cent in registrations compared with 2007. The smallest fall was recorded in Wales (4 per cent) where 282 partnerships were registered in 2008.

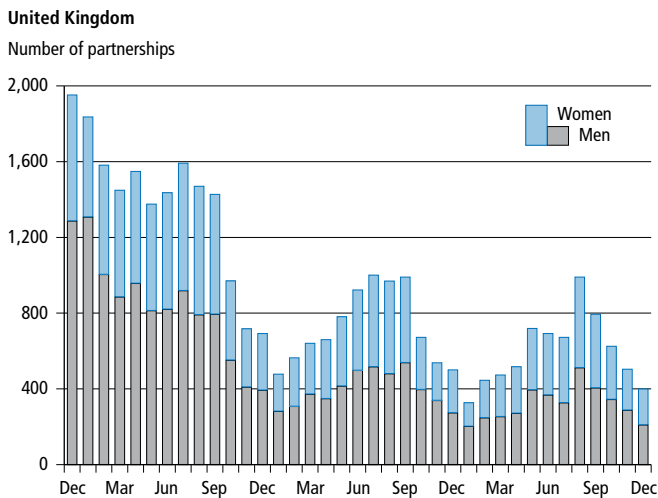
In order to obtain the dissolution of a civil partnership, a couple must have been in a registered partnership, or a recognised foreign relationship, for at least 12 months. In 2008 there were 180 civil partnership dissolutions granted in the UK. Of these, the majority took place in England, where there were

154 dissolutions. There were 14 dissolutions in Scotland, 12 in Wales and none in Northern Ireland.

The number of divorces that took place in England and Wales in the 1920s and the early 1930s averaged slightly more than 3,000 per year. Following an Act of Parliament in 1938 that extended the grounds on which divorce was allowed, numbers increased considerably throughout the 1940s, to a peak of around 60,300 in 1947 (Figure 2.15). Although the number of divorces then fell to a low of 22,700 in 1958, there was a further increase during the 1960s. The *Divorce Reform Act 1969*, which was subsequently consolidated into the *Matrimonial Causes Act 1973*, removed the concepts of a 'guilty party' and 'matrimonial offence' and introduced the idea of 'the irretrievable breakdown of marriage'. This had a considerable impact on divorce numbers in England and Wales, which exceeded the 100,000 mark in 1972 at 119,000, an increase of almost 60 per cent on the previous year.

From the 1970s onwards, England and Wales generally saw an upward trend in the number of divorces each year, reaching the highest recorded peak of 165,000 in 1993. There were around 128,500 divorces in England and Wales in 2007 (a rate of 11.9 divorcing people per 1,000 married population), a fall of 3 per cent compared with 2006 (12.2 divorcing people per 1,000 married population). This was the fourth successive annual fall and was the lowest number of divorces in a single year since 1976 when there were just under 126,700 divorces, 10.1 divorcing people per 1,000 population. In Scotland, there were around 11,500 divorces registered in 2008, a fall of 10 per cent on the previous year when 12,800 divorces were recorded. The number of divorces in Scotland peaked at just

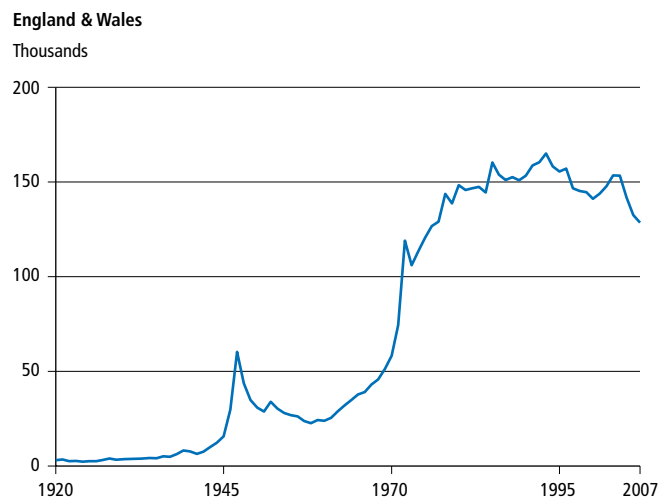
Figure 2.14
Civil partnerships:¹ by sex, 2005 to 2008



¹ Data do not include civil partnerships of UK residents taking place abroad but will include non-UK residents who form a partnership in the UK. See Appendix, Part 2: Civil partnership.

Source: Office for National Statistics; General Register Office for Scotland; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Figure 2.15
Divorces



Source: Office for National Statistics

under 13,400 in 1985. In 2008, just under 2,800 divorces were recorded in Northern Ireland, around 100 fewer than in 2007. There were around 2,900 divorces in 2007, which was an increase of around 14 per cent on 2006 and the highest number of divorces recorded in Northern Ireland in a single year.

Family formation

A number of demographic trends have influenced families and households in recent times, most notably the decline and delay of marriage and childbearing. However, the number of births in England and Wales increased for the seventh successive year in 2008, rising from 690,000 in 2007 to 709,000 in 2008. The number of live births is now at its highest level since 1972, when there were 727,000 live births. During this period the average age for women giving birth for the first time has risen from 23.8 years to 27.5 years. Since the 1970s there has been a fall in the proportion of babies born to women aged under 25, from 47 per cent in 1971 (369,600 live births) to 25 per cent in 2008 (180,700 live births) (Figure 2.16).

Conversely, there has been an increase in the proportion of births to older women, with births to women aged 35 and over accounting for 20 per cent of all births each year for the past four years (142,600 live births in 2008). The last time the proportion of births to women in this age group was at this level was in 1945 (137,700 live births).

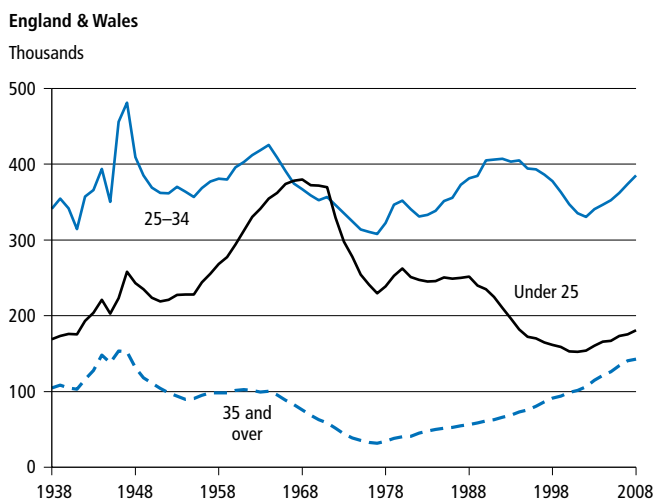
In Scotland, the number of births in 2008 among those aged 35 and over exceeded births to women aged 20 to 24. More than 60,000 births were registered in Scotland in 2008, which

was the sixth consecutive rise and the highest number recorded since 1995. There were 25,600 births registered in Northern Ireland in 2008, a rise of 5 per cent on the previous year and also the sixth successive annual rise in births.

Figure 2.17 compares the average age of women in England and Wales at their first marriage and the average age of mothers at their first childbirth. Overall, the average age of women at first marriage fell between the 1930s and 1960s, before beginning to rise, reaching 29.8 years in 2007. This partly reflects the choices many women make to live independently, to continue their education and to participate more fully in the labour market rather than follow the more 'traditional' route of early marriage. Along with changing attitudes to marriage have come changing attitudes to motherhood. Over the same period, the average age of first birth within marriage has followed a similar pattern. In 2007, it was 30.3 years: around six months more than the average age at first marriage.

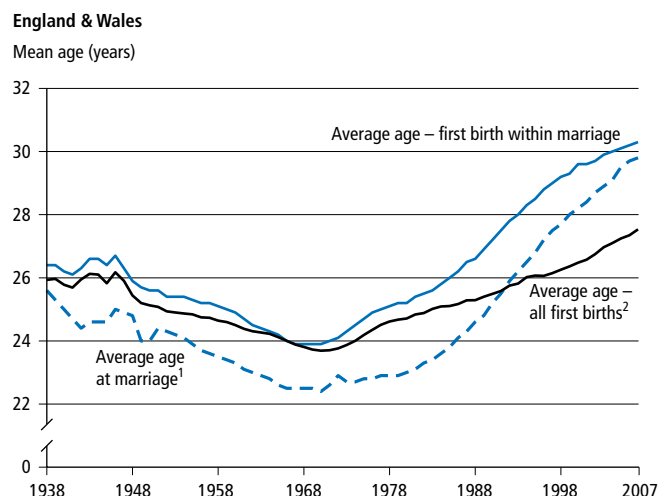
The average age of all women at the birth of their first child, whether within marriage or not, also fell between the 1930s and 1960s but began to increase from the early 1970s, although at a much slower rate than the age at marriage and the age at first childbirth within marriage. In 1992, the average age for women at their first childbirth fell below the average age at marriage and in 2007 was 27.5 years (see Appendix, Part 2: Mean age).

Figure 2.16
Live births: by age of mother at birth of child



Source: Office for National Statistics

Figure 2.17
Average age of women at first marriage¹ and first live birth



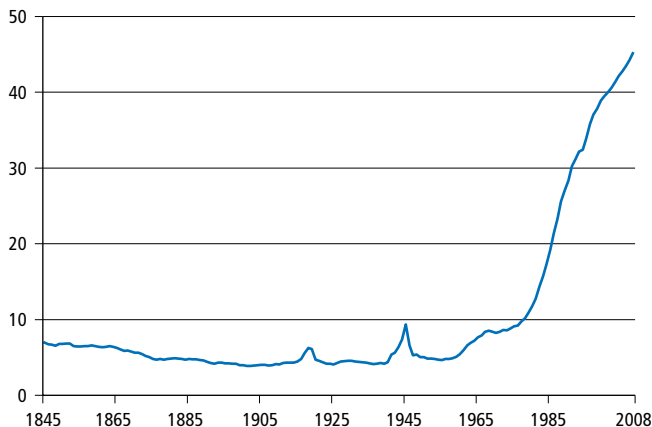
1 For single (never-married) women.
2 Standardised for the age-distribution of the population. This measure is more appropriate for use when analysing trends or making comparisons between different geographies.

Source: Office for National Statistics

Figure 2.18
Births outside marriage¹

England & Wales

Percentages



¹ As a percentage of all births.

Source: Office for National Statistics

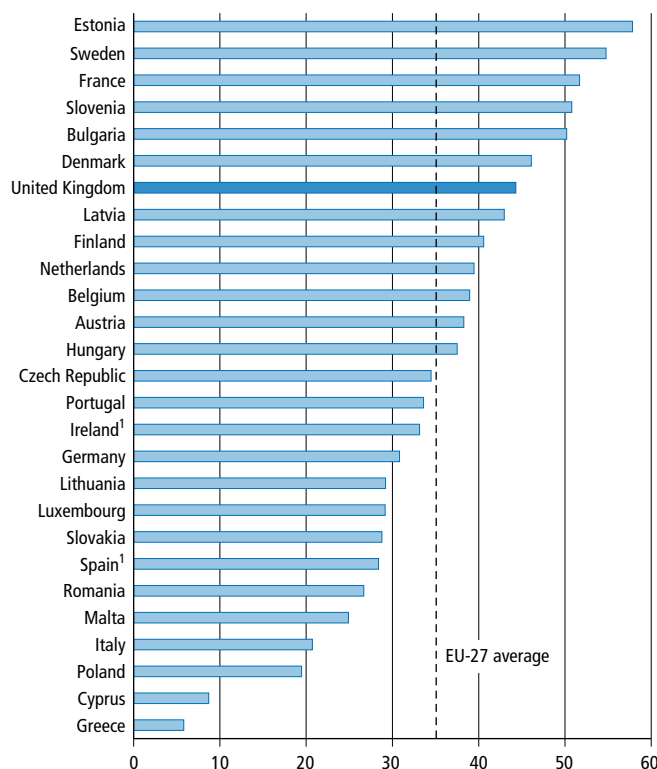
With the exception of the periods immediately following the two world wars, relatively few births occurred outside marriage during the first 60 years of the 20th century (Figure 2.18). Births outside marriage became more commonplace during the 1980s and 1990s, and by 2008 there were 320,800 live births outside marriage in England and Wales, accounting for 45 per cent of all live births that year. This was an increase of 1 percentage point on the previous year when there were 305,600 live births outside marriage. In 1971, less than 10 per cent of all live births in England and Wales were outside marriage (65,700 births). Of these, more than half (55 per cent) were solely registered. In 2008, 65 per cent of births were registered by parents living at the same address (most likely to be cohabiting parents), 21 per cent were registered by parents living at different addresses and 14 per cent were solely registered.

There were 42,000 births outside marriage to women aged under 20 in England and Wales in 2008, equivalent to 94 per cent of all births to women of that age. Almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of all live births to mothers aged 20 to 24 in 2008 were outside marriage. This compares with 43 per cent of live births to mothers aged 25 to 29 and 28 per cent to mothers aged 30 to 34. For older age groups the figures increase to 30 per cent for mothers aged 35 to 39, and 36 per cent for mothers aged 40 and over. In Scotland, the proportion of births outside marriage rose to 50 per cent for the first time in 2008. In Northern Ireland in 2008, there were almost 10,000 births outside marriage, around 39 per cent of all births.

Family patterns vary among the 27 European Union (EU-27) member states because of cultural differences, as well as variations in attitudes, values and behaviour. However the increase in the proportion of births taking place outside marriage seen in the UK is one factor common to almost the whole EU-27. In 2007, more than a third (35 per cent) of all births in the EU were outside marriage (Figure 2.19). Five countries in the EU-27 had a higher proportion of births outside marriage than within. Estonia had the highest proportion of live births outside marriage at 58 per cent, followed by Sweden at 55 per cent, France (52 per cent), Slovenia (51 per cent) and Bulgaria (just over 50 per cent). In Sweden, babies born to married parents have been in a minority for the last decade, with around 55 per cent of births occurring outside marriage since the mid-1990s. In Denmark, the proportion of births outside marriage has remained fairly stable over the past two decades, at between 45 and 47 per cent. Greece (6 per cent) and Cyprus (9 per cent) had the lowest proportions of births outside marriage in the EU-27, much lower than Poland, which was the third lowest (just under 20 per cent).

Figure 2.19
Births outside marriage: EU comparison, 2007

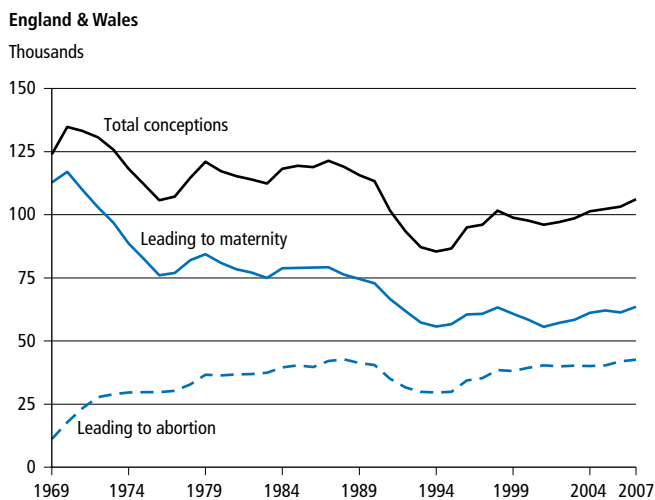
Percentages



¹ Data are for 2006.

Source: Office for National Statistics; Eurostat

Figure 2.20

Teenage conceptions: by outcome^{1,2}

1 See Appendix, Part 2: Conceptions.

2 Residents only.

Source: Office for National Statistics

After the introduction of free contraception on the NHS in 1974, the rate of teenage conceptions to females aged 15 to 19 declined overall for around a decade but rose by 21 per cent between 1983 and 1990. The rates began to fall again in the early 1990s, increasing slightly between 1995 and 1998.

In England and Wales in 1969, the year after the *Abortion Act 1967* came into effect, there were around 124,000 conceptions to teenage females (a rate of 75.3 conceptions per 1,000 females aged 15 to 19) and around 9 per cent of these were terminated (Figure 2.20). In 2007, there were fewer teenage conceptions than in 1969, at around 106,000 and the rate was also lower at 61.7 conceptions per 1,000 females aged 15 to 19. However, a higher proportion (43 per cent) of these conceptions led to abortion.

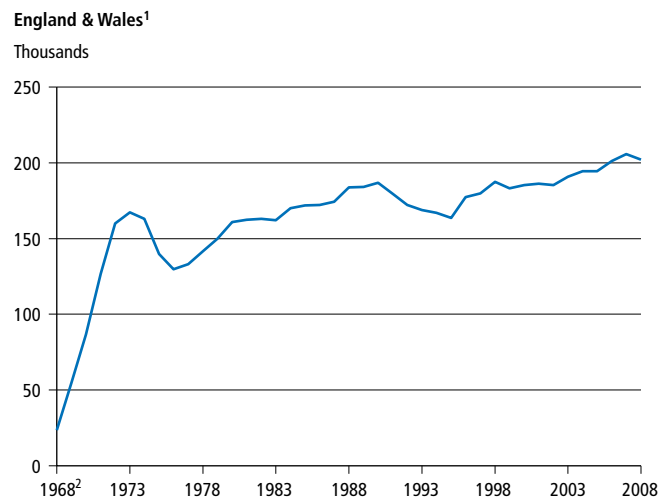
In 1969, there were 6,600 conceptions to girls aged under 16 (6.9 conceptions per 1,000 girls aged 13 to 15), of which 25 per cent were terminated. The equivalent figures for 2007 were 8,200 conceptions (8.3 conceptions per 1,000 girls aged 13 to 15) and 62 per cent of these were terminated.

There were around 54,800 legal abortions in 1969, a rate of 5.2 abortions per 1,000 females aged 15 to 44. This figure more than doubled by 1971, when there were just under 126,800 legal abortions, a rate of 9.9 per 1,000 females in this age group (Figure 2.21).

During the early 1990s, the total number of abortions in England and Wales fell slightly, before rising again between 1995 and 1996. In 1995 the Committee on Safety of Medicines warned that several brands of the contraceptive pill

Figure 2.21

Legal abortions



1 Residents and non-residents.

2 1968 figure contains only eight months data as the *Abortion Act 1967* came into effect on 27 April 1968.

Source: Department of Health

carried a relatively high risk of thrombosis. This warning is believed to have contributed to the increase in abortion rates in 1996, particularly among young women as they were more likely to have been using the pill. Since this pill scare, abortion rates have continued to rise for all age groups except those aged under 16, whose abortion rates have stayed broadly stable.

In 2008 there were 202,200 legal abortions, equivalent to 18.2 abortions per 1,000 females aged 15 to 44. This is a fall of around 2 per cent on the peak of 205,600 legal abortions in 2007. Almost 6,900 of the legal abortions in England and Wales in 2008 were to residents of other countries, mostly from Ireland (67 per cent) and Northern Ireland (17 per cent). The total number of legal abortions to non-residents in 2008 was the lowest number recorded since 1969.

Around 8 in 10 abortions (81 per cent) to England and Wales residents in 2008 were carried out for single women. Ethnicity was recorded in 94 per cent of cases: 76 per cent were reported as White, 10 per cent as Black or Black British and 8 per cent as Asian or Asian British.

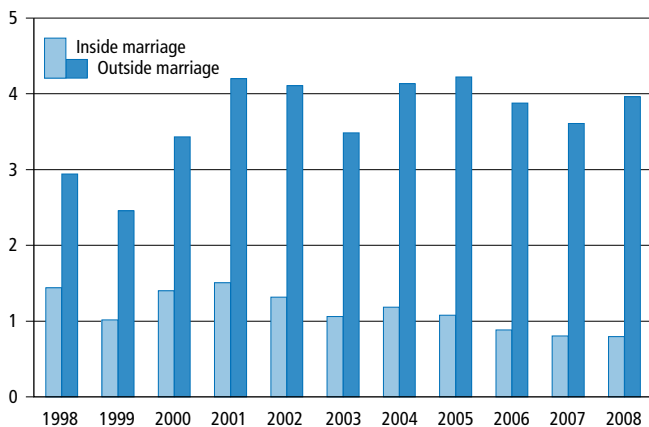
There were 13,703 abortions in Scotland in 2007, a rate of 13.0 abortions per 1,000 females aged 15 to 44, compared with 3,566 in 1969, or 3.5 abortions per 1,000 females aged 15 to 44.

For some people, one way to have children is through adoption. Children can be adopted from birth up to and including 17 years of age. On 30 December 2005, the

Figure 2.22**Adoptions:¹ by whether child was born inside or outside marriage²**

England & Wales

Thousands



1 Adoptions by date of entry in Adopted Children Register.

2 Excludes cases where marital status was not stated. See Appendix, Part 2: Adoptions.

Source: Office for National Statistics

Adoption and Children Act 2002 was fully implemented. It replaced the *Adoption Act 1976* and modernised the legal framework for adoption in England and Wales. The Act provides for an adoption order to be made in favour of single people, married couples and, for the first time, civil partners, same-sex couples and unmarried couples. The Act also

introduced Special Guardianship to provide permanence for children who cannot return to their birth families, but for whom adoption is not the most suitable option.

In 2008, the total population in England and Wales of under 18-years-old was 12.4 million. There were a total of 5,065 children entered onto the Adopted Children Register in 2008, of which, 3,960 children were born outside marriage, and 793 were born within marriage, the remainder (312 children) were recorded as marital status unknown. In comparison, 4,382 children were entered onto the Adopted Children Register in 1998, 2,941 children born outside marriage, and 1,441 children born within marriage (Figure 2.22).

Longer term trends show that in England and Wales there were 21,495 adoptions entered onto the Adopted Children Register in 1971. The number fell rapidly during the 1970s and continued to fall steadily over the 1980s and 1990s. There was an increase in adoptions at the start of this century and in the most recent period, between 2007 and 2008, there was a 9 per cent increase in the number of children entered onto the Adopted Children Register.

In Scotland, 441 children were adopted in 2007 compared with 470 children in 1997. Of those adopted in 2007, 30 per cent were adopted by a step parent and 66 per cent were adopted by someone unrelated to them. Figures for Northern Ireland show that 150 children were adopted in 1997, compared with 147 in 2007.