



## General Household Survey 2007

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# Overview Report

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**Overview Report**

Results for the 2007 General Household Survey (GHS) are now available. The GHS is a multi-purpose survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

From 1994-5 to 2004-5, the GHS was conducted on a financial year basis, with fieldwork spread evenly across the year April-March. However, in 2005 the survey period reverted to a calendar year and the whole of the annual sample (which was increased to 16,560) was dealt with in the nine months April to December 2005. From January 2006, the survey runs from January to December each year.

Since the 2005 survey did not cover the January-March quarter, this affected annual estimates for topics which are subject to seasonal variation. To rectify this, where the questions were the same in 2005 as in 2004-05, the final quarter of the 2004-05 survey was added (weighted in the correct proportion) to the nine months of the 2005 survey.

Another change in 2005 was that, in line with European requirements, the GHS adopted a longitudinal sample design, in which households remain in the sample for four years (waves) with one quarter of the sample being replaced each year. Thus approximately three quarters of the 2005 sample were re-interviewed in 2006. More details are given in Appendix B.

A major advantage of the longitudinal component of the design is that it is more efficient at detecting statistically significant estimates of change over time than the previous cross-sectional design. This is because an individual's responses to the same question at different points in time tend to be positively correlated, and this reduces the standard errors of estimates of change.

The GHS collects information on a range of topics from people living in private households in Great Britain. These are:

- households, families and people;
- housing and consumer durables;
- marriage and cohabitation;
- general health and use of health services;
- smoking and drinking;
- occupational and personal pension schemes .

A report on smoking and drinking can be found at [www.statistics.gov.uk/ghs](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/ghs). Selected findings for other topics are summarised in this overview. GHS results will be combined with those from other sources in *Social Trends* and other reports due to be published in 2009.

## Households, families and people

Between 1971 and 1991 the average size of household in Great Britain declined, from 2.91 persons to 2.48. It continued to decline, though at a slower rate, throughout the 1990s, falling to 2.32 by 1998, since when it has changed little. In 2007 the average number of persons per household was 2.35.

In 2007, 77 per cent of families with dependent children in Great Britain were headed by a married or cohabiting couple. This proportion fell markedly in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (92 per cent of families were of this type in 1971) but has changed little since the late 1990s. The percentage of families that are headed by a lone mother rose from 7 per cent in 1971 to 22 per cent in 1998 and has remained at about the same level since then. The proportion headed by a lone father has risen slightly since the early 1970s, but since the mid-1990s has remained at about 2-3 per cent. In total, the proportion of families headed by a lone parent has increased from 8 per cent in 1971 to 24 per cent in 2007.

In 2007, 51 per cent of families with dependent children headed by a lone parent had a usual weekly gross income of £300 or less, compared with only 7 per cent of families headed by a married couple, and 15 per cent of those headed by a cohabiting couple.

## Housing and consumer durables

Between 1971 and 2007 the proportion of households owning their home rose from 49 per cent to 71 per cent. Most of the increase occurred during the 1980s, and was due to a marked increase in the proportion of households owning with a mortgage.

The percentage of households renting council homes increased from 31 per cent in 1971 to 34 per cent in 1981, but since then has declined steadily to 11 per cent in 2007.

The percentage of households renting from a housing association rose from 1 per cent in 1971 to 3 per cent in 1991, the increase continuing since then to 8 per cent in 2007.

The percentage of households renting privately fell from 20 per cent in 1971 to 10 per cent in 1995, since when it has changed little.

Since the early 1970s, the GHS has recorded a steady rise in the ownership of many consumer durables and household amenities – some that were available only to a minority of households in the early 1970s were in much more widespread use by 2007. For example, 96 per cent of households had central heating in 2007, compared with only 37 per cent in 1972. Access to a car or van has also risen since the survey began (at least one car or van was available to 52 per cent of households in 1972, rising to 77 per cent in 2007).

Just over half (54 per cent) of all households had a telephone in 1975. In 2007, 99 per cent had a phone (either fixed or mobile). In 2000, when the GHS first asked about mobile phones, the proportion of households in which at least one person had a mobile phone was 58 per cent; this had risen to 81 per cent in 2007.

The proportion of households with a home computer increased from 13 per cent in 1985 to 71 per cent of all households in 2007.

## Marriage and cohabitation

In the 1970s, the GHS asked women aged 18 to 49 only about their current marriage: since then, the questions have been developed and extended from time to time to reflect changes taking place in society. The survey now obtains information about marital history and periods of cohabitation from all adults aged 16 and over.

In 2007, 14 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women aged 16 to 59 were cohabiting. Among men aged 16 to 59, those aged 25 to 29 were more likely to cohabit than any other group (33 per cent of men aged 25 to 29 compared with between 1 per cent and 24 per cent in the other age groups). Among women, those in their twenties were more likely to be cohabiting than other age groups (29 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 and 31 per cent of women aged 25 to 29 compared with 3 to 21 per cent in the other age groups).

Among women aged 18 to 49, the longest time series for which data are available, the proportion of women who were married at the time of interview declined from 74 per cent to 49 per cent in 2007. The proportion of women who were single (i.e. who had never been married) more than doubled from 18 per cent in 1979 to 38 per cent in 2002, since when it has remained at about the same level.

The proportion of women aged 18-49 who were cohabiting at the time of interview has increased from 11 per cent in 1979 to 33 per cent in 2007.

## Occupational and personal pension schemes

The GHS has included questions on occupational pensions on a regular basis since 1981 and on personal pensions since 1987.

Since 1989 trends in participation in employer pension schemes have differed for men and women, and for those working part-time and full-time.

The proportion of men working full-time who were members of their current employer's occupational pension scheme decreased from 64 per cent in 1989 to 53 per cent in 2007. The percentage of women working full time who were members of an occupational pension scheme showed a different pattern, rising from 55 per cent in 1989 to 60 per cent in 2002 and then falling to 58 per cent in 2007.

Among women working part-time, the proportion who were members of an occupational pension scheme has more than doubled from 15 per cent in 1989 to 39 per cent in 2007.

Since 1991, the GHS has provided trend data on personal pension arrangements among self-employed men. The possession of a current personal pension among self-employed men working full-time remained fairly stable between 1991 and 1998 at around two thirds. Between 1998 and 2007 the proportion with a current personal pension decreased from 64 per cent to 42 per cent.

In 2007, self-employed men were more likely than self-employed women to have personal pension arrangements (39 per cent of self-employed men compared with 23 per cent of self-employed women were currently in a personal pension scheme). Over a third (39 per cent) of self-employed men had never had a personal pension compared with over a half (57 per cent) of women.

## General health and use of health services

The GHS provides information about the self-reported health of adults and children, and about their use of health services.

In 2007, 63 per cent of adults said they had good health, 25 per cent reported they had fairly good health and 12 per cent said their health was not good. In the past decade self-assessed general health has remained largely unchanged.

Thirty one per cent of people (all age groups) reported a long standing illness in 2007. Eighteen per cent reported a long-standing illness that caused them to cut down on their activities, a similar level to that observed in previous surveys.

In 2007, over 1 in 10 (13 per cent) of adults and children saw an NHS GP in the 14 days before interview. This proportion has changed little in the previous 30 years. Females had an average of five NHS GP consultations per year whereas males had four. In general the likelihood of seeing a GP increased with age. For example, 12 per cent of adults aged 16 to 44 had consulted a GP in the 14 days before interview compared with 19 per cent of adults aged 75 and over.

In 2007, 14 per cent of all respondents had attended an outpatient or casualty department in the three months before interview. This figure has not changed since 2001. There was an increase from 10 per cent in 1972 to 16 per cent in 1998 before declining. The proportion of people attending hospitals as day patients in the twelve months before interview increased since this question was first asked in 1992 from 4 per cent to 8 per cent in 2005. In 2007, 7 per cent of people reported an inpatient stay in the twelve months before.

Source: General Household Survey, 2007