



## General Household Survey 2004

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# Overview Report

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## Overview Report

Results for the 2004/05 General Household Survey (GHS) are now available. The GHS is a multi-purpose continuous survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Fieldwork was conducted on a financial year basis. 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
- occupational and personal pension schemes
- general health and use of health services
- smoking and
- drinking.
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The GHS provides authoritative estimates for the topics of smoking and drinking and detailed topic-based summaries may be found at [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

Selected findings for the remaining topics are summarised below. These are presented as a guide to the content of the GHS for users and other analysts. GHS results will be combined with those from other sources in *Social Trends* and other reports due to be published in 2006. Each of these reports will provide definitive analysis and estimates for the topic that it covers.

### Households, families and people

The GHS collects data on the composition of households and families.

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 next decade, falling to 2.32 by 1998. Since then it has remained fairly constant. In 2004 the average number of persons per household was 2.30.

In 2004, 75 per cent of families with dependent children in Great Britain were headed by a married or cohabiting couple. This is a proportion that has declined steadily since 1971, when 92 per cent of families were of this type. Lone-father families have accounted for 1 per cent to 3 per cent of families with dependent children since 1971, whereas the percentage headed by lone-mothers has risen from 7 per cent in 1971 to 23 per cent in 2004.

The percentage of families with dependent children headed by lone mothers who have never married (i.e. are single) has risen from 1 per cent in 1971 to 11 per cent in 2004, whereas the percentage headed by mothers who were previously married, and are now divorced, widowed or separated, has risen from 6 per cent to 12 per cent.

## Housing and consumer durables

The GHS includes questions on housing, tenure and the availability of consumer durables.

Between 1971 and 2004 home ownership increased from 49 per cent to 69 per cent. Most of this increase happened in the 1980s and has levelled off since then.

The percentage of households renting council homes increased from 31 per cent in 1971 to 34 per cent in 1981, but then gradually declined during the 1980s to 24 per cent in 1991. The percentage continued to decrease, and in 2004 13 per cent of all households rented from the council.

The percentage of households renting from a housing association increased from 1 per cent in 1971 to 3 per cent in 1991, continuing throughout the 1990s to 7 per cent in 2004.

The percentage of private renter households decreased from 20 per cent in 1971 to 10 per cent in 1995. The percentage has remained between 10 per cent and 11 per cent since 1995.

Since the early 1970s, the GHS has recorded a steady rise in the ownership of consumer durables. Ownership of household amenities that were available only to a minority of households in the early 1970s were more widespread by 2004. For example, the percentage of households with central heating rose from 37 per cent in 1972 to 94 per cent in 2004.

Access to a television has always been highly prevalent since the survey began (93 per cent of households in 1972, rising to 99 per cent in 2004). The proportion of households using satellite, cable or digital television was first measured by the GHS in 1996 when 18 per cent of households received satellite, cable or digital television. This figure rose to 55 per cent by 2004.

Ownership of home computers increased from 13 per cent in 1985 to 60 per cent of all households in 2004. Access to the Internet at home has also increased in recent years, from 33 per cent of households in 2000 to 51 per cent in 2004.

Less than half (42 per cent) of all households had a telephone in 1972. In 2000, 98 per cent had a phone (either fixed or mobile). Since then, the proportion of households with fixed telephones has remained almost constant (between 92 per cent and 93 per cent). There has however been an increase in the presence of mobile phones. The proportion of households owning mobile telephones increased from 58 per cent in 2000 to 79 per cent in 2004.

## Marriage and cohabitation

The GHS has collected information on current marital status since 1971, since when questions have been extended to include cohabitation.

Overall 13 per cent of men and 12 per cent of women aged 16 to 59 were cohabiting. In 2004 among men aged 16 to 59, those aged 25 to 29 were more likely to be cohabiting than any other group (31 per cent of men aged 25 to 29 compared with 2 per cent to 20 per cent in the other age groups). Among women, those in their twenties were more likely to be cohabiting than other age groups (24 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 and 25 per cent of women aged 25 to 29 compared with 4 to 16 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 has steadily declined from 74 per cent in 1979, to 61 per cent in 1991 and to 48 per cent in 2004. The proportion of women who were single has more than doubled from 18 per cent in 1979 to 39 per cent in 2004.

The proportion of non-married women who were cohabiting at the time of interview has increased from 11 per cent in 1979 to 28 per cent in 2004. Among single women, the proportion cohabiting has increased from 8 per cent in 1979 to 29 per cent in 2004. The proportion of divorced women who were cohabiting at the time of interview rose from one in five (20 per cent) in 1979 to around one in three (between 32 per cent and 35 per cent) since 1998.

## 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 2004. 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 56 per cent in 2004.

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 34 per cent in 2004.

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 2004 the proportion with a personal pension decreased from 64 per cent to 49 per cent.

Self-employed men were more likely than self-employed women to have personal pension arrangements (44 per cent of self-employed men compared with 27 per cent of self-employed women were currently in a personal pension scheme). Over a third (34 per cent) of self-employed men had never had a personal pension scheme compared with over a half (54 per cent) of women.

## General health and use of health services

The GHS provides data about the use of health services among children and adults in the general population. The GHS also asks people to assess their state of health using a common scale.

In 2004, 60 per cent of adults said they had good health, 27 per cent reported they had fairly good health and 14 per cent said their health was not good. In the past five years self-assessed general health has remained largely unchanged.

In 2004 over 1 in 10 (14 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 three. 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 compared with 22 per cent of adults aged 75 and over.

In 2004, 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 has increased since this question was first asked in 1992 (from 4 per cent in 1992 to 8 per cent in 2004). In 2004, 8 per cent of people reported an inpatient stay in the twelve months before interview – the proportion has remained between 7 per cent and 8 per cent since 1998.

Source: General Household Survey, 2004/5