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Coverage

United Kingdom

Theme

Social and Welfare

An ageing and more diverse society

Social Trends – 35 years of social change

The United Kingdom population is ageing and within 10 years there will be more people aged 65 and over than children under 16, according to *Social Trends* published today by the Office for National Statistics.

This is the 35th year of *Social Trends* and the publication looks back over these years of social change in a special review by National Statistician Len Cook and Research Director Jean Martin.

It shows growth in the minority ethnic population, which has resulted in a more diverse society. Household income has risen, although income inequality has widened. Life expectancy has increased but so have the number of years that we can expect to live in poor health or with a disability. Technology has transformed many of our lives and our dependence on the car is greater than ever.

Social Trends contains a wide range of statistics on many aspects of contemporary British society and how it has changed over the years. Some other interesting findings from the new edition include:

- The United Kingdom has an ageing population. Between 1971 and 2003 the number of people aged 65 and over rose by 28 per cent while the number of under 16s fell by 18 per cent.
- In 1971, half of the UK population was aged under 34.1 years. This median age rose to 38.4 years in 2003.

Issued by
National Statistics
1 Drummond Gate
London SW1V 2QQ

Telephone
Press Office 020 7533 5702
Email press.office@ons.gov.uk
Public Enquiries 0845 601 3034

Contact
Carol Summerfield 020 7533 5780
Baljit Gill 020 7533 5332
Email baljit.gill@ons.gov.uk

Internet
www.statistics.gov.uk

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www.statistics.gov.uk/socialtrends35



- The proportion of children living in lone-parent families in Great Britain tripled between 1972 and spring 2004, to 24 per cent.
- In spring 2004, 58 per cent of young men (aged 20 to 24), and 39 per cent of young women of the same age lived at home with their parents in England.
- With the exception of mathematics and science at Key Stage 2, in 2004, girls outperformed boys in England in all subjects at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3; the greatest differences were for English.
- The proportion of three and four year olds enrolled in all schools in the United Kingdom tripled from 21 per cent in 1970/71 to 65 per cent in 2003/04.
- Long/term sickness or disability was the most common reason given for economic inactivity by working-age men in spring 2004; for women the most common reason was looking after the family or home.
- Wealth is very much less evenly distributed than income: in 2002 half the adult UK population owned only 6 per cent of total wealth.
- In 2002/03, 7 to 15 year old girls in the United Kingdom spent about 12 per cent more than boys of the same age.
- Household spending on communications in the United Kingdom almost trebled in volume terms between 1991 and 2003.
- The proportion of adults in England who were obese increased between 1993 and 2003: from 13 to 23 per cent of men and from 16 to 23 per cent of women.
- In 2003/04, smoking was most common among adults in routine and manual households in Great Britain (35 per cent of men and 31 per cent of women) and least prevalent among those in managerial and professional households (20 per cent and 17 per cent respectively).



- The proportion of NHS GP consultations in Great Britain that took place in the home in the 14 days before interview fell from 22 per cent in 1971 to just 4 per cent in 2003/04.
- In 2001–02, 64 per cent of parents in the United Kingdom with babies aged 9 to 10 months had used grandparents to look after their babies while the main carer was at work or college.
- Over seven in ten of both men and women previously convicted for theft and handling stolen goods in England and Wales were reconvicted within two years of their discharge from prison in 1999.
- The number of owner-occupied dwellings in Great Britain increased by 44 per cent between 1981 and 2003, while the number of rented dwellings fell by 17 per cent.
- The United Kingdom produced around 4 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources in 2003, compared with an EU-25 average of 14 per cent.
- The number of licensed cars on Britain's roads continued to increase to nearly 28 million in 2003, over four times the number in 1961.
- UK residents took 41.2 million holidays abroad in 2003, six times the number in 1971; Spain was the most popular destination in both years.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The publication is also available electronically, with links to the data contained in the charts and tables, from the National Statistics website: www.statistics.gov.uk/socialtrends35.
2. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
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