

An Overview of the UK Family Today: Factsheet

Family structure

- In 2006, **77%** of children lived with both their natural parents, compared to 85.8% in 2001/2.
- Of these parents, **62.5%** were married, and **24%** were cohabiting in 2007, compared to 62.5% and 14.2% in 2006.
- The number of single mothers increased in the same period, rising from 13.7% in 2001/2 to **17.2%** in 2006.
- The average couple have **1.8** children (2006), compared to 2.0 in 1971.

Marriage

- In 1961, the average age at first marriage in England and Wales was 25.6 years for men and 23.1 years for women; by 2007 this had increased to **31.9** years for men and **29.8** years for women.
- The number of marriages and divorces fell in the decade between 1996 and 2006. In 1996 there were 278,875 marriages and 157,107 divorces; by 2006 there were only **239,454** marriages and **132,56** divorces.
- The median length of a marriage before divorce has changed little over the past 40 years: the earliest data available (1963) showed marriages lasted just under 12 years, while in 2000 the figure was 11 years. By 2004, this figure had risen to **11.5** years.

Parenting participation

- In 2006, **21.1%** of non-resident fathers had contact with their child at least three times a week, while **28%** had no contact at all with their offspring.
- **36.6%** of non-resident fathers paid child maintenance regularly, while 54.5% made no financial contribution.
- In 2006, **90%** of fathers were in employment, compared to **68%** of mothers.
- **28%** of grandparents provided childcare.
- **95.3%** of women read to their child at least once a week, compared to **82.2%** of men. When this figure is broken down, **52.5%** of mothers read to their child every day, while only **15.7%** of fathers did.
- **70%** of families eat their evening meal at the table at least three times a week.
- From 2005-2007, the TV dinner became less popular: in 2005, 46% of families ate in the lounge/living room, 32% in the dining room; 19.8% in kitchen. By 2007, the balance was **39.8%**, **37.2%**, and **21.5%** respectively.

Sources: Social Trends 39, 2009; Millennium Cohort Study (4), 2008