

Families and households

Strand organiser: Ben Wilson, Office for National Statistics

The changing dynamics of leaving home and returning home among young adults in Britain.

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Young adults in Britain tend to leave home early relative to their European counterparts but recent attention in Britain has focused upon the increasing proportion of young adults who live with their parents (Patinotis and Holdsworth, 2005; Berrington et al., 2009). Over the past twenty years there have been significant changes in the institutional and structural context within which young adults make these transitions. These include the expansion of higher education, the collapse of the youth labour market and increased house prices. Furthermore, ideational changes have altered young adults' orientations towards family and employment careers. As a result, patterns of leaving the parental home and transitions to independent living, partnership and family formation in the UK are now more protracted and diverse than they were in the past.

This paper uses data from the British Household Panel Survey to quantify the changing dynamics of leaving and returning to the parental home in Britain. 17 annual waves of data are available, from 1991 to 2007. We track the living arrangements of young adults aged 16-17 in 1991, 1997 and 2002, during a five-year follow-up period. Using regression models we examine the factors facilitating leaving home and encouraging return to the parental home. Specific research questions include: How are individual and parental resources associated with movement out of and return to the parental home? How do these factors vary according to gender and socio-economic background? Does the type of parental family structure have any independent impact on the speed of departure or return? What changes in the above relationships have there been between the early 1990s and mid 2000s? The paper extends previous work by explicitly comparing cohorts of young adults in the early 1990s, late 1990s and 2000s, and by focusing on both leaving and returning home.

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Use of childcare and early education by families in England: Trends of the last decade.

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Just over ten years ago, childcare and early years provision in England was largely determined by market forces and was expensive, of variable quality and inaccessible to most families. This started to change in 1998 with the introduction of the National Childcare Strategy. Further significant policy developments followed, and the childcare market and early years provision have been transformed dramatically, in particular, with regard to achieving an almost universal take-up of part-time early education by three and four year old children. The paper focuses on trends in families' take-up of childcare and early education over 1999-2008, using data from the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents series. The surveys were carried out by the National Centre for Social Research on behalf of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (formerly DfES). Each of them comprised of several thousand face-to-face interviews with parents with children aged under 15. The research questions addressed in the paper are: What are the main developments in families' use of formal and informal childcare and early years education over 1999-2008? How does childcare use vary by child, family and area characteristics such as child's age, family income and work status, and level of deprivation in the area? How successful have the Government's

policies been in reducing inequalities in access to childcare and early years provision between different types of families?

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Family dynamics: A British study of birth order, family size and parental investment effects on education.

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The British Household Panel Survey is used to test the Resource Dilution Theory relating to family size. This theory states that child outcomes are reduced due to a dilution of finite resources available to them as the family size increases. The resources include the necessities of life and cultural objects (physical resources); the personal attention parents give to a child, including ability to intervene in child's schooling (time resource and personal attention); and enabling the child to experience the world through educational trips (intellectual resources). Following Booth & Kee's (2009) paper, the British family size effects on number of years of education are identified, controlling for birth order. In an attempt to extend Booth and Kee's work, further controls for parental class and family structure at age 14 & 16 are added. The results show that there is some support for the resource dilution theory, educational attainment declines as family size increases. Fathers' class is a small but significant mediator for the family size effect while mothers' class has no effect. Family structure doesn't affect educational outcomes in the way we would expect, with controls when the respondent was 14, not yielding statistically significant results, and measures when the respondent was 16, although statistically significant shows that being in a 'nuclear family' has a negative effect on educational outcomes. This finding contradicts the intuition of the resource dilution model. A stronger family size effect is found for those born in the 1920s and 1930s who may have felt the effects from disruption in education provision and a reduction of resources (parental and physical). Although the family size effect has reduced over time, with more positive coefficients recorded for the later cohorts. The exclusion of lone children from the model does not, as the literature points to, strengthen the family size effect significantly, suggesting that in the UK the lone children do not achieve substantively different levels of educational attainment.

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Does sectarianism exist in Scotland? A statistical examination of Catholic and Protestant intermarriage patterns.

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In recent years there continues to be debate about the extent to which Scotland is afflicted by religious sectarianism. Our paper contributes to the debate about sectarianism in Scotland by using 2001 Census data available via the Scottish Longitudinal Study of over 111 thousand couples. Bruce et al (2005, 151) argue that sectarianism "is more a myth than a social reality". Others (Walls & Williams, 2003, 632; Walls & Williams, 2005) argue that on the contrary there is a "continuing experience of sectarian discrimination in work...affecting Glasgow's Irish Catholic community", during the period 1950-2000. Lindsay (2000, 363) discovered that rather than Catholics being held back from moving up the social scale that their status has probably risen "to a greater extent than non-Catholics" in Scotland, a position more consistent with Bruce et al, but the position with older Catholics was more problematic. We have used data from cohabiting couples where both were born in Scotland, aged 16-74 and raised in a Christian denomination or with no religion. The sample represents around 11% of all such couples in the Census. One major result of our statistical analysis is that the proportion of inter-sectarian (Roman Catholic and Protestant) couples has increased

steeply for the youngest age groups and in the West of Scotland, these make up 25% of all couples. This measure of chronological change as an index of a dilution of sectarianism is perhaps consistent with recent studies of Glasgow concerning young people's marginal sectarian habits (Holligan & Deuchar, 2009; Deuchar & Holligan, 2010) compared with significant territoriality, in the case of young people. It is concluded however that religious inter-marriage is not necessarily indicative of a demise in sectarianism, being for instance a symptom of its putative decline; and also that despite being in inter-marriages members of those couples may nevertheless continue to display sectarian attitudes in other contexts, such as football.

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Cross-cohort differences in the relationship between work history and partnership formation for British men

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This paper investigates the relationship between work histories and first partnership formation for British men. Two research questions are asked: (1) Do instabilities in young men's careers lead to a higher probability of entering into cohabitation and, in turn, to a postponement of first marriage? (2) Are there cohort differences in the importance of men's careers for their partnership decisions? The analyses are based on data from two British birth cohort studies relating to people born in 1958 and 1970. Apart from allowing a full account of partnership and work histories to be constructed, these studies are unique in the range of information they provide on variables that may influence these histories: e.g. different aspects of social origins and personality features. My results suggest that highly unstable occupational careers, coupled with intermittent employment histories, make it very likely that young men enter into a first cohabitation rather than a first marriage. Also, having an unstable occupational career substantially increases the risk of experiencing serial cohabitation, which in turn reduces the chance of marriage. In addition, having experienced a highly unstable work history early in working life is a strong impediment to transforming cohabitation into marriage. Finally, I find no evidence of a cross-cohort weakening of the effects of men's work careers on their partnership decisions.

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An investigation into partnership difficulties and support

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An investigation into partnership difficulties and support Introduction Couple relationships are becoming increasingly fragile. Understanding more about relationship difficulties and support is critical given the unequivocal association between relationship breakdown and poor adult and child well-being. Objectives To conduct the secondary analysis of an existing dataset to increase our understanding of relationship difficulties and ways in which these can be overcome. Sample and Methodology 112 in-depth interviews and 8 focus group discussions among individuals currently in a couple relationship. Participants were selected from public areas to achieve the required quota in terms of gender, age, relationship status, parenting status, socio-economic group, educational level and geographical area. Findings The qualitative investigation found that relationship strain was associated with the transition to parenthood, financial difficulties, unwanted influence of friends and in-laws, and illness. People's subjective assessments of their relationship quality varied immensely. They included those being 'completely happy', 'it's not right', and 'one that we've worked at'. Deeper analysis of these relationship states revealed how people differed in their views regarding relationship improvement and support. Two contrasting perspectives were identified – those with a

‘developmental’ and ‘non-developmental’ perspective. The former understood that relationships are flexible, can change through time and often encounter times of difficulty. They also saw the importance (and perceived benefits) of ‘working’ on their relationship and took various steps to achieve this. Implications Based on the assumption that people who hold ‘developmental’ beliefs are likely to be motivated to maintain and improve their relationship, the findings can be used to develop interventions which aim to modify people’s attitudes and behaviour towards this perspective. Understanding the antecedents to this perspective is an area in need of further investigation.

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Re-marry, re-cohabit, or reconcile? How demographic and socio-economic factors are related to the different exits from lone motherhood.

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A clear preference for repartnering in the form of a cohabiting rather than a marital union has been noted by studies examining repartnering of lone parents (Böheim and Ermisch, 1998) as well as repartnering of all individuals (Ermisch and Francesconi, 2000; Wu and Schimmele, 2005; Skew, Evans and Gray, 2009). However, what is unknown for lone mothers is how the effects of explanatory covariates may differ depending on the type of new partnership a lone mother enters. This paper uses data collected by the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) and employs discrete-time multinomial logistic hazard models to simultaneously model entry into marriage and cohabitation. Initially, results suggest that the route of entry into lone motherhood has a strong impact on the choice of new union type; those who entered through the dissolution of a marriage are more likely to form a marriage than those entering through the breakdown of a cohabiting union or through giving birth whilst single and never-married. However, much of this is found to result from previously married lone mothers reconciling with their former spouse. Removing all those that reconcile with a former partner from the model considerably reduces the magnitude of this difference and renders it statistically insignificant. Overall, age and employment are important for both marriage and cohabitation, but number of children is only important in relation to forming a marriage and mental health only significant with respect to forming a cohabiting union.

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Re-partnering in Eastern and Western Europe.

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In previous work on household composition across the EU, we noted that while the highest rates of divorce and separation are observed in Scandinavian countries, it is in a number of Eastern European countries where we observe the highest proportions of adults living without a spouse or partner, and reporting themselves separated or divorced. This is particularly evident in terms of the very high proportions of lone mothers observed in Eastern Europe, particularly in the Baltic states. In this paper, we hypothesise that this arises because of differences in the rates of re-partnering among divorced and separated people. Using data from the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, which covers 25 states of the enlarged European Union, we tabulate re-partnering rates across the countries of the EU and find that rates of re-partnering in Eastern Europe are indeed relatively low. For each country we analyse the determinants of re-partnering including age, education, children, work and incomes; and we examine economic, social and cultural

differences between countries, in an attempt to explain why these differences in the rate of re-partnering are observed.

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Educational heterogamy and marital quality: A new look at the old question(s).

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The detrimental effect of heterogamy on relationship quality and stability is well established in sociological theory. However, empirical research has failed to provide unequivocal support for this view. An important reason for this appears to be at a conceptual level. Focusing on educational heterogamy, two types of effects have been commonly examined under the banner of heterogamy effects: 1. the effect of the educational difference between the partners, and 2. the interaction effect between the levels of education of the partners. Despite representing two conceptually different views on heterogamy effects, previous research has failed to distinguish between them. This paper presents the theoretical distinction between both heterogamy effects, and empirically analyses them. This is done using Diagonal Reference Models – a technique from social mobility research that is particularly useful for analyzing heterogamy effects. Based on data concerning 643 couples from the survey Child-rearing and family in the Netherlands, it is shown that the effect of the educational difference is felt by both men and women as both report the highest marital satisfaction in marriages where the educational difference is to the advantage of the husband. In addition, men, but not women, are subject to the interaction effect, as the importance of his level of education in determining his own degree of marital satisfaction is accentuated, the more the educational balance in the couple is to his advantage. These results illustrate how conceptual clarification, in combination with the appropriate analysis technique may advance the field of heterogamy research.

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The concept of Quality of Life seen through the European Community Household Panel: microdata used for Spain, year 2000, Wave 7.

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Quality of life is a multifaceted concept which is primordially associated with health and the self-perception of one's health (Walker, A., 2007). Yet, in this research work, QoL will be addressed from a different perspective, the three indicators that are analysed are: the household conditions, the internal and external (environmental) problems that affects them, the essential equipment of the household, and the material/non-material (social relations) goods which the person interviewed owns. The objective variables used to measure these indicators will be contrasted with the subjective variables, i.e, with what difficulties does he/she make ends meet at the end of the month and the persons opinion on his/her household condition. All of the variables used have also been analysed by civil state, sex, and level of income (or poverty rate, i.e, from the least poor to the very poor). This research work is based on wave 7-2000, European Community Household Panel (ECHP) micro-data analyses for Spain; thus the income level or poverty rate is based on the household disposable income as measured by the OECD-modified equivalence scale used by EUROSTAT. The questionnaires used for that year have been the adult, and the household, treated nationwide, downloaded from the National Institute of Statistics, INE, Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, <http://www.ine.es>. The conclusions than can be derived from this research work is that the married population benefits more from both material and non-material goods than the rest of the

population, suffers less from internal and external problems within the household and has more amenities within the household also than the rest of the civil states.

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Family structure and child health: A longitudinal model using the Millennium Cohort Study.

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Background and objectives: An increasing number of children are born to unmarried parents. A number of studies, particularly in the US, have shown that children growing with two continuously married parents do better on a range of cognitive, emotional and developmental outcomes, both in childhood and adulthood. Less literature is available from the UK, and we do not know if there is also a link with child's physical health.

Methods: The Millennium Cohort Study, a nationally representative study, follows about 18,000 children born in the UK between 2000 and 2001. This paper will look at a range of physical health outcomes including respiratory illnesses, BMI and waist circumference, and unintentional accidents, over the first 5 years of life. A longitudinal model will explore the relative importance of socio-economic disadvantage, parental mental health and parenting behaviours in producing these outcomes. The paper will also explore how to capture longitudinal change in these types of variables.

Results: I will show that children living with continuously married parents do best, followed by those living with continuously cohabiting parents, while those living with a lone parent do worst (for example, 11.8% of children living with continuously married parents had asthma by age 5, compared to 22.2% of those always living with a lone parent and 14.4% of those living with continuously cohabiting parents). Those who experience changes in family structure are a heterogeneous group with diverse experiences. I will argue that socio-economic disadvantage is the most important factor driving these results.

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The consequences of late motherhood and family structures on children's health outcomes

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In recent years, fertility rates amongst women over 30 have increased in the US and the UK. This trend, combined with increasingly diverse and complex family formation patterns, may have important implications for child well-being. Using data from the Millennium Cohort Study (U.K) and the Fragile Families (U.S.), we examine whether and to what extent mothers' age at birth mediates the well established association of child health outcomes with family structure. Family disruption is expected to have a direct impact on the household disposable income, which in turn affects the resources available to the child. Because mother's advanced age is likely to be positively correlated with high educational level, a stable job and higher financial well-being, we expect that a higher maternal age might be associated with a range of advantages that may mitigate the deleterious effects of family disruption and be protective of child health. Because the form and function of family life differs by ethnic background, the models are estimated paying particular attention to respondents' race/ethnicity. Child health is a particularly important dimension to study comparatively across these two settings, given their similar demographic and economic profiles, the strong socioeconomic and racial patterning in family structure, and, in contrast, the remarkable differences in terms of health care provision and child policies. Compared to the U.S., the U.K. has different social institutions and policies set up to reduce inequality which may enable parents to provide important resources to children and to maintain them after a family disruption.

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