



General Household Survey 2005

Overview Report

Matt Fido

Rachel Gibbins

Chris Hurt

David Matthews

Tina Thomas

Office for National Statistics

Government Buildings

Cardiff Rd

Newport

NP10 8XG

Tel: 01633 812630

Email: ghs@ons.gsi.gov.uk

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Results for the 2005 General Household Survey (GHS) are now available. The GHS is a multi-purpose survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Since April 1994, the GHS has been 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 has been increased to 16,560) was dealt with in the nine months April to December 2005. Future surveys will run from January to December each year.

Since the 2005 survey does not cover the January-March quarter, this affects 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 has been added (weighted in the correct proportion) to the nine months of the 2005 survey.

A higher sampling fraction was applied to the nine months of the 2005 survey compared with the final quarter of the 2004-05 survey. Consequently, the unweighted bases shown in tables where 2004-05 survey data has been added may give a false impression of the precision of the estimates. The effective sample size for these tables is 95% of the actual sample count.

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

- smoking,
- drinking,
- households, families and people,
- housing and consumer durables,
- marriage and cohabitation,
- Occupational and personal pension schemes (results to be published in 2007).

The GHS provides authoritative estimates in the topics of smoking and drinking. A detailed summary and a longer report on these topics can be found at www.statistics.gov.uk/ghs

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 2007. 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 2005 the average number of persons per household was 2.30.

In 2005, 74 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 between 1 and 3 per cent of families since 1971, whereas the percentage of families that are headed by a lone-mother has risen from 7 per cent in 1971 to 24 per cent in 2005.

The percentage of families headed by mothers who have never married (i.e. are single) has increased from 1 per cent in 1971 to 11 per cent in 2005. The percentage of families headed by mothers who were previously married, and are now divorced, widowed or separated, has risen from 6 per cent to 13 per cent during the same period. In total, the proportion of families headed by lone parents has increased from 8 per cent in 1971 to 26 per cent in 2005.

Housing and consumer durables

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

Between 1971 and 2005 home ownership increased from 49 per cent to 68 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 2005 12 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 2005.

The percentage of households renting privately 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 2005. For example, the percentage of households with central heating rose from 37 per cent in 1972 to 95 per cent in 2004.

Ownership of home computers increased from 13 per cent in 1985 to 63 per cent of all households in 2005.

Access to a car or van has also risen since the survey began (56 per cent of households in 1972, rising to 75 per cent in 2005).

Just over half (54 per cent) of all households had a telephone in 1975. 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 ownership of mobile phones. The proportion of households with mobile phones increased from 58 per cent in 2000 to 80 per cent in 2005.

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 13 per cent of women aged 16 to 59 were cohabiting in 2005. Among men aged 16 to 59, those aged 25 to 29 were more likely to cohabit than any other group (30 per cent of men aged 25 to 29 compared with between 2 per cent and 21 per cent in the other age groups). Among women, those in their twenties were more likely to be cohabiting than other age groups (25 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 and 26 per cent of women aged 25 to 29 compared with 5 to 18 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 47 per cent in 2005. The proportion of women who were single has more than doubled from 18 per cent in 1979 to 39 per cent in 2005.

The proportion of non-married women aged 18-49 who were cohabiting at the time of interview has increased from 11 per cent in 1979 to 29 per cent in 2005. Among single women, the proportion cohabiting has increased from 8 per cent in 1979 to 31 per cent in 2005.

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 31 per cent and 35 per cent) in the years since 1998.

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 2005, 59 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.

Thirty three per cent of people (all age groups) reported a long standing increase, an increase of two percentage points since the previous survey. Nineteen per cent

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reported a long-standing illness that caused them to cut down on their activities, a similar level to that observed in previous surveys.

In 2005 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 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 21 per cent of adults aged 75 and over.

In 2005, 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 2005). In 2005, 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, 2005