

Chapter 5: Marriage and cohabitation

Marriage and cohabitation

The family information section within the General Lifestyle Survey (GLF) and the General Household Survey (GHS) provides the longest running time series of reliable statistics on partnerships and relationships in Great Britain. It is one of the only government surveys that collects data on family history, which is vital for understanding partnership transitions and partnership stability.

In 1979 questions on marital history were introduced on the GHS for both men and women. Questions were also introduced for women aged 18 to 49 relating to pre-marital cohabitation before the current or most recent marriage. In 1986 these questions were extended to both men and women aged 16 to 59 and every marriage past and present. In 1998 a further question was added to find out the number of past cohabitations not ending in marriage and in 2000 new questions were included on the length of past cohabitations not ending in marriage. The 2010 GLF continued to collect information about marital history and periods of cohabitation from adults aged 16 to 59.

How the data are used and their importance

GLF and GHS data on family formation have been extremely valuable for understanding the changes that have occurred in society over the last four decades. For example, changes in the proportion of cohabiting partners and in the stability of relationships have highlighted policy issues, such as the rights of cohabiting couples and the welfare of children. For these reasons, the GLF and GHS are widely used by researchers working within and outside Government. An example is the [Population Trends](#) research article, Cohabitation and marriage in Britain since the 1970s, written by the Centre for Population Change (CPC)¹. The article uses GHS and GLF data to provide an overview of trends in marriages and relationships over several decades and emphasises the importance of good information on family trends.

The GLF estimates of the England and Wales population by partnership status are used to inform and quality assure cohabitation estimates, which themselves feed the assumptions made for cohabitation projections. Estimates and projections of the cohabiting population are made alongside the publication of marital status projections and are used by other government departments for statistical modelling relating to housing policy and benefits policy. The Cohabitation estimates for England and Wales are published on the ONS website^{2,3}.

The results

Information about the marital status of all adults aged 16 or over in the household is collected in two stages. First, the marital status of all adults aged 16 and over is collected from the person answering the household questionnaire (usually the Household Reference Person (HRP) or their partner). At the second stage, each household member aged 16 to 59 is asked detailed questions about their marriage and cohabitation history. For this stage, respondents are given the option of self-completion, particularly if the interviewer judges that a lack of privacy might affect reporting. In 2010, around 20 per cent of respondents chose to self-complete the questions.

For the 2009 and 2010 survey years, if a respondent was in the longitudinal sample of the GLF, but hadn't answered the second stage section of the questionnaire in the previous year, their full marriage and cohabitation history was not collected. As a consequence, the proportion of full responses to the marriage and cohabitation sections of the questionnaire is lower for these years.

***De facto* marital Status**

De facto marital status (that is, including cohabitation) is the legal marital status of the respondent unless the respondent was currently cohabiting with someone else; in which case cohabiting is the *de facto* status. Cohabiting couples are people who live together as a couple in a household without being married to each other. Respondents who were single, widowed, divorced or separated but who were cohabiting are here classified as cohabiting, rather than by their legal marital status. Those who were not cohabiting have been classified by their legal marital status.

In 2010 the *de facto* marital status of men aged 16 and over was: 52 per cent were married, 1 per cent were in a civil partnership, 10 per cent were cohabiting, 28 per cent were single, 3 per cent were widowed and 6 per cent were either divorced or separated. Among women aged 16 and over the estimates are: 49 per cent were married, less than 1 per cent were in a civil partnership, 10 per cent were cohabiting, 22 per cent were single, 10 per cent were widowed and 9 per cent were either divorced or separated.

[Table 5.1](#)

Current cohabitation

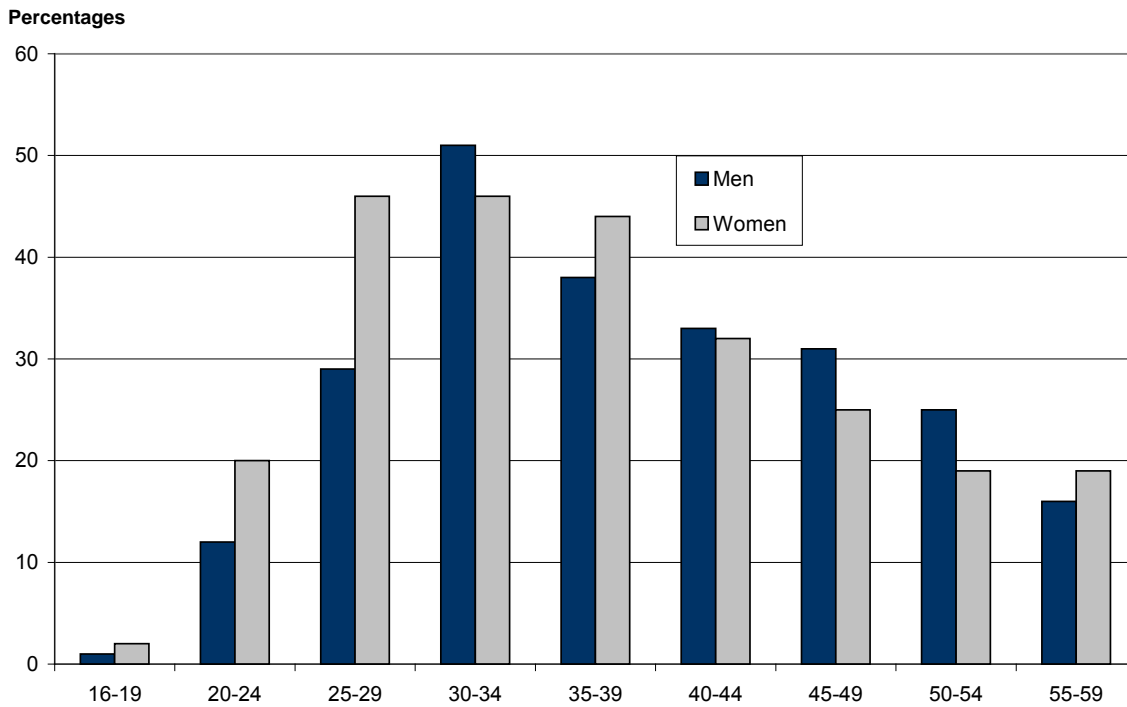
In 2010, 13 per cent of both men and women aged 16 to 59 were currently cohabiting. Among men aged 16 to 59, those in the 25 to 29 and 30 to 34 age groups were most likely to be currently cohabiting than any other age group (22 per cent of men aged 25 to 29 and 26 per cent of men aged 30 to 34, compared with fewer than 18 per cent in all other age groups). Among women aged 16 to 59, those aged 25 to 29 were more likely to be cohabiting than any other age group (30 per cent of women aged 25 to 29 were cohabiting compared with 2 per cent to 19 per cent in the other age groups). Overall among non-married people aged 16 to 59, 25 per cent of men and 27 per cent of women were currently cohabiting. Non-married women were more likely to be cohabiting in

the younger age groups than men. For example, 29 per cent of non-married men aged 25 to 29 were cohabiting compared with 46 per cent of women in this age group.

[Table 5.3](#), [Figure 5.1](#)

Figure 5.1 Percentage of non-married¹ men and women aged 16 to 59 currently cohabiting² by age, 2010

Great Britain



1 Men and women describing themselves as 'separated' were in a legal sense still married. However, because the separated can cohabit, they have been included in the 'non-married' category

2 'Cohabiting' includes same sex couples

Source: *General Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics*

Data from 2009 and 2010 have been combined to provide a large enough sample to analyse current cohabitation by age and legal marital status. Among non-married men aged 16 to 59, those who were divorced and those who were single were the most likely to be currently cohabiting; 30 per cent of divorced men and 26 per cent of single men compared with 10 per cent of separated men and 3 per cent of widowed men. Among non-married women aged 16 to 59, those who were single were most likely to be currently cohabitating (30 per cent), followed by those who were divorced (22 per cent), separated (10 per cent) and widowed (2 per cent).

[Table 5.4](#)

Current cohabitation and trends over time among women

As noted earlier, women aged 18 to 49 were the first to be asked questions on cohabitation in the GHS. This section looks at the trends over time for this age group.

Since 1979 the proportion of women aged 18 to 49 who were married declined from 74 per cent in 1979 to 47 per cent in 2003. Since then this proportion has changed little and in 2010, 46 per cent of women aged 18 to 49 were married. In contrast, the proportion of women who were single (that is, who had never been married) increased from 18 per cent in 1979 to 45 per cent in 2010.

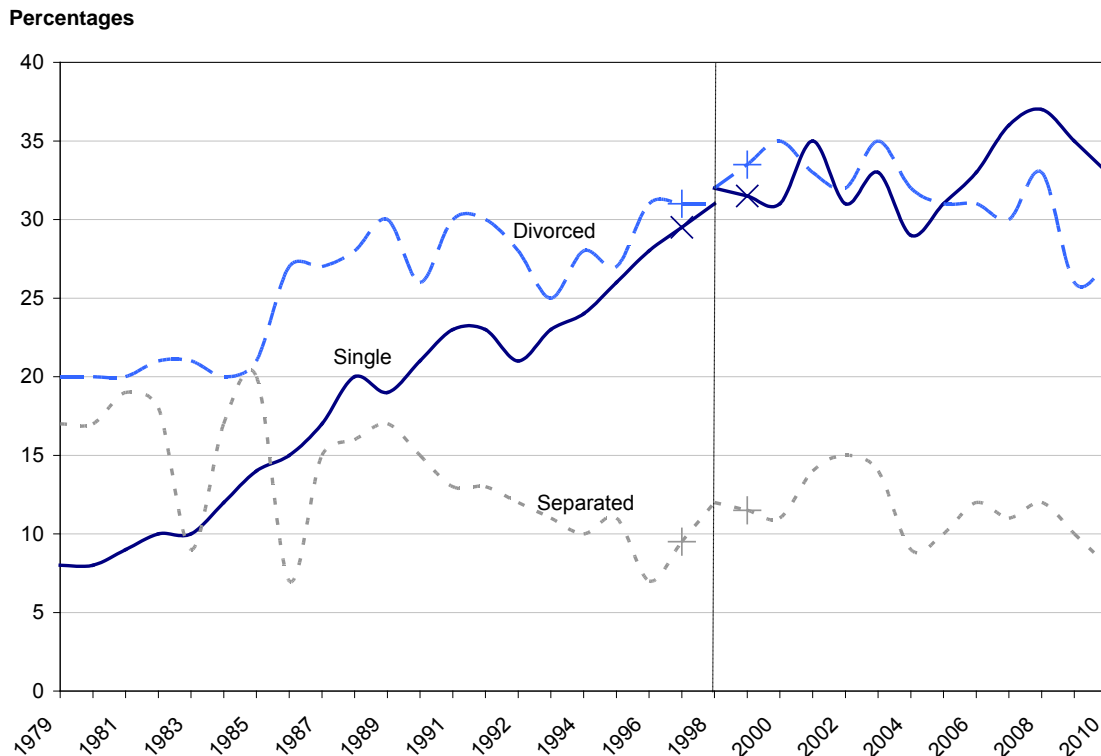
[*Table 5.7*](#)

In terms of current cohabitation, the proportion of non-married women aged 18 to 49 who were cohabiting increased from 11 per cent in 1979 to 32 per cent in 2001. Since then the proportion has ranged between 28 per cent and 35 per cent and in 2010, 31 per cent of non-married women aged 18 to 49 were cohabiting. The increase in the proportion of cohabiting non-married women since 1979 has been driven by an increase in the proportion of single women cohabiting. Among single women aged 18 to 49, the proportion cohabiting more than quadrupled from 8 per cent in 1979 to 33 per cent in 2010.

[*Table 5.8, Figure 5.2*](#)

Figure 5.2 Percentage of single, divorced and separated women¹ aged 18 to 49 cohabiting by legal marital status, 1979 to 2010^{2,3,4,5}

Great Britain



- 1 Widows have not been included because of the small sample size.
- 2 2005 data includes the last quarter of 2004/05 data as the survey changed from a financial year to a calendar year. Results from 2006 onwards include longitudinal data.
- 3 For 1998 unweighted and weighted data are shown for comparison purposes. Weighted data are not available before this point.
- 4 The survey was not run in 1997/98 or 1999/00. A linear trend has been drawn between the data point before and after these years.
- 5 The volatility in the 'separated' time-series reflects the small sample size for this group of women.

Source: General Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics

Dependent children in the household and current cohabitation among women

In households with children, children may be dependent or non-dependent. Dependent children are those aged less than 16 living with at least one parent, or aged 16 to 18 in full-time education, excluding all children who have a spouse, partner or child living in the household.

In 2010 among women aged 16 to 59, 55 per cent of married women had at least one dependent child in their household compared with 46 per cent of cohabitating women, 20 percent of single women, 38 per cent of divorced women and 53 per cent of separated women.

[Table 5.9](#)

In 2010, as in previous years, non-married women aged 16 to 59 who had dependent children in their household were more likely than those without dependent children to be cohabiting. Forty-two per cent of non-married women who had at least one dependent child living with them were cohabiting, compared with 20 per cent of non-married women without dependent children. This

difference was driven by the proportions for single women; over half (52 per cent) of single women who had dependent children living with them were cohabiting, compared with 30 per cent of single women without dependent children.

[Table 5.10](#)

Past cohabitations not ending in marriage

In 1998, for the first time, the GHS asked a question to find out the number of past cohabitations not ending in marriage. Since 2000, questions have also been included to establish the length of past cohabitations not ending in marriage. These periods of completed cohabitation do not include the current relationship of a respondent living as a couple at the time of interview.

With the exception of those who chose the self-completion option, married and cohabiting respondents might have been interviewed in the presence of their partner. Therefore, it is possible that previous cohabitations may be under-reported for these groups.

In 2010 among adults aged 16-59, 18 per cent had at least one completed cohabitation that did not end in marriage; 12 per cent had only one completed cohabitation not ending in marriage; 4 per cent had two; and 1 per cent had three or more.

As in previous years, the proportions reporting past cohabitations not ending in marriage varied by current marital status for both men and women. Married people were less likely than other respondents to report these kinds of relationships (13 per cent of men and 11 per cent of women) compared with those who were cohabiting (22 per cent of men and 24 per cent of women), single (21 per cent of men and 28 per cent of women) or divorced (29 per cent of men and 27 per cent of women).

[Tables 5.12 and 5.13](#)

Duration of past cohabitations not ending in marriage

Among adults aged 16 to 59, 38 per cent of first cohabitations lasted for less than two years compared with 50 per cent of second cohabitations. The difference was more marked among men (40 per cent of first cohabitations lasted for less than two years compared with 56 per cent of second cohabitations) than among women (37 per cent compared with 44 per cent).

First cohabitations that did not end in marriage tended to be longer than second cohabitations. Among adults aged 16 to 59 who have cohabited, the average length of time for the first cohabitation not ending in marriage was 45 months compared with 34 months for the second cohabitation.

[Table 5.15](#)

References

- 1 Beaujouan, É & Ní Bhrolcháin, M (2011), 'Cohabitation and marriage in Britain since the 1970s', *Population Trends* 145, Autumn 2011, Office for National Statistics:
www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/population-trends-rd/population-trends/no--145--autumn-2011/index.html
- 2 ONS (2010), Cohabitation Estimates, England and Wales release, available at:
www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/family-demography/cohabitation-estimates--england-and-wales/cohabitation-estimates/index.html
- 3 ONS (2011), Population Estimates by Marital Status, Mid-2010, available at:
www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pop-estimate/population-estimates-by-marital-status/mid-2010/index.html

Chapter 6: Occupational and personal pension schemes

Occupational and personal pension schemes

The General Household Survey (GHS) has included questions on occupational pensions on a regular basis since 1981 and on personal pensions since the late 1980s. The General Lifestyle Survey (GLF) continues to include these questions. This chapter provides information on occupational and personal pensions for employees and also considers the pension arrangements of the self-employed. The chapter presents both trends over time and detailed data for the 2010 survey year.

How the data are used and their importance

GLF and GHS data on pension participation are used by a number of policy departments, including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Treasury (HMT) and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). The departments use the GLF to monitor and evaluate current policy and policy reforms, and to assist future policy development. Recent policy developments, for which the GLF has been one of a number of important sources, include the Government's review of the 2012 workplace pension reforms¹, as set out in the Pensions Act 2008².

The wealth of information collected on the GLF gives pensions analysts and policy makers information about the groups of the population who are not making adequate pension provisions. For example, the survey provides pension participation rates by age, gender, income band, employment status and employment sector.

Other sources for pension statistics

This chapter aims to provide a summary of the results from the GLF and GHS. However, the GLF is just one of many sources for pension statistics. A more comprehensive picture of pensions is given in the ONS publication [Pension Trends](#)³. *Pension Trends* brings together information from a variety of different sources and reports on the many complex issues that shape trends in pension provision in the UK. Such issues include: population change; life expectancy and healthy ageing; the labour market and retirement; and saving for retirement.

The results

The analysis in this chapter shows results broken down by sex and employment status (full or part-time employment). However, few of the tables and figures show data for men working part time. This is because the sample sizes for men working part time are generally not large enough to provide reliable estimates.

Data are presented for both occupational and personal pension schemes. Occupational pension schemes are schemes provided by employers. Personal pensions may be arranged individually or through an employer, but in either case they are provided by insurance companies. Personal pensions include stakeholder pensions and self-invested personal pensions (SIPPs). If they are facilitated by an employer, they are known as group personal pensions (GPPs), group stakeholder pensions or group SIPPs.

Pension arrangements for employees

In 2010 around three-fifths of full-time employees (61 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women) were currently members of a pension scheme. Among part-time women employees, 43 per cent were currently members of a pension scheme. Younger employees (those under the age of 25) were the least likely to be a member of a current pension scheme. Among male employees aged 18 to 24 working full time, 26 per cent were in a current pension scheme compared with 52 per cent or more in the older age groups (25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, and 55 years and over).

[Table 6.1](#)

Pension scheme membership also varies by socio-economic status. The socio-economic classification (NS-SEC) used in this report is based on information about people's occupation and employment status (please see *Appendix A, Definitions and terms* for further information). Employees in the managerial and professional group were most likely to be current members of a pension scheme, with those in the routine and manual group least likely to be a member of a scheme. Among men working full time, 74 per cent of those in the managerial and professional group belonged to a pension scheme compared with 64 per cent in the intermediate group and 44 per cent in the routine and manual group. For women working full time the figures were: 73 per cent in the managerial and professional group; 57 per cent in the intermediate group; and 39 per cent in the routine and manual group. Similarly, for women working part time the figures were: 65 per cent; 57 per cent; and 32 per cent respectively.

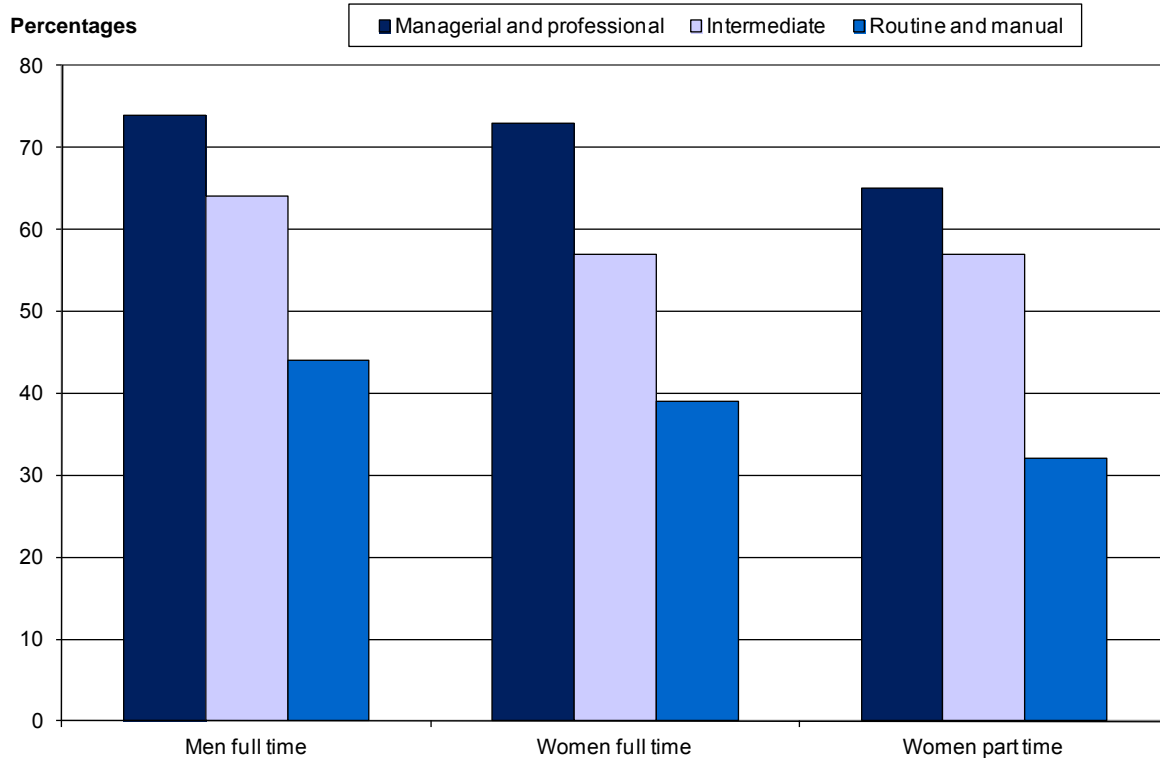
[Table 6.4, Figure 6.1](#)

Employees in the higher 'usual gross weekly' earnings groups were generally more likely to belong to a pension scheme than employees with lower earnings. Among employees working full time, 83 per cent of men and 87 per cent of women with usual gross weekly earnings of more than £600 belonged to a pension scheme. In contrast, for male and female full-time employees earning between £100 and £200 per week, the percentages were 19 per cent and 30 per cent respectively.

[Table 6.6](#)

Figure 6.1 **Current pension scheme membership¹ by sex and socio-economic classification, 2010**

Great Britain



1 Employees aged 16 and over, excluding Youth Trainees and Employment Trainees. Membership includes a few people who were not sure if they were in a scheme but thought it possible.

Source: General Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics

Membership of occupational pensions

Occupational pensions are the most common type of pension arrangement for employees and are the focus of this section. They do not include group personal pensions, group stakeholder pensions or group self-invested personal pensions which are based on individuals entering into a contract with an external pension provider in the form of an insurance company.

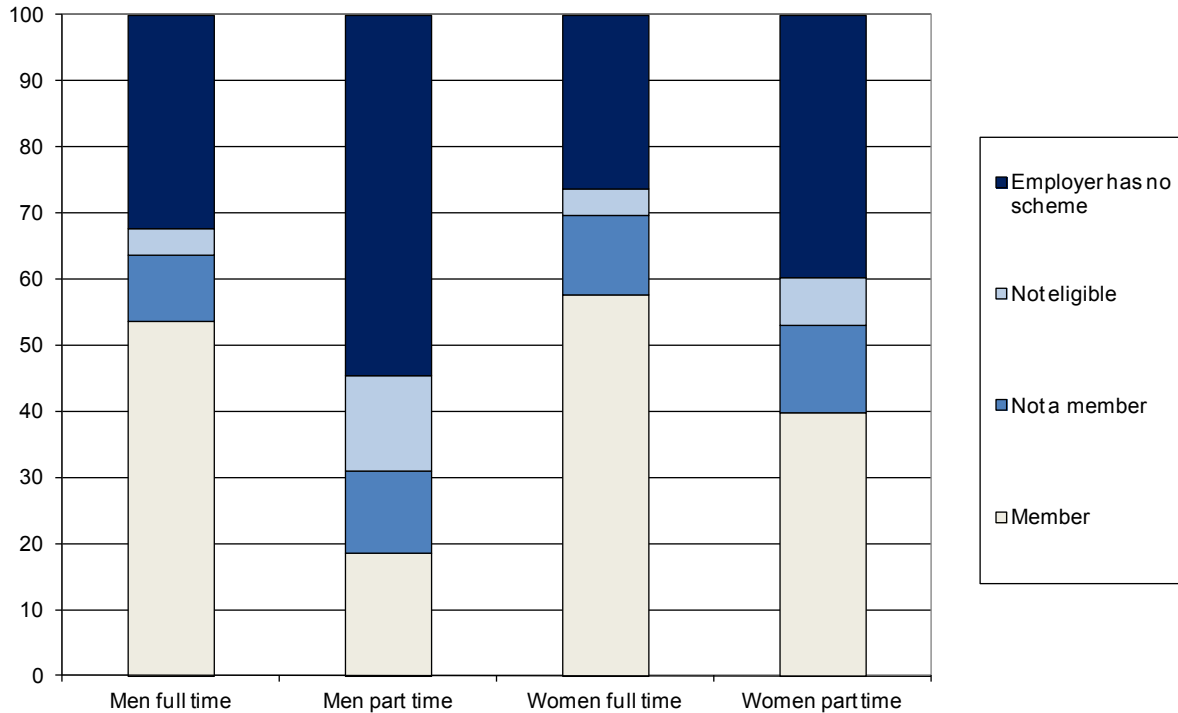
In 2010, 64 per cent of men and 67 per cent of women said that their present employer had an occupational pension scheme. Membership of such schemes varied by sex and work status (full time or part time employment). Employees who worked full time were more likely than those working part time to say that their present employer had a pension scheme; 67 per cent of men working full time compared with 44 per cent of men working part time, and 74 per cent of women working full time compared with 59 per cent of women working part time.

[Table 6.2](#), [Figure 6.2](#)

Figure 6.2 Membership¹ of current employer's occupational pension scheme by sex and whether working full time or part time, 2010

Great Britain

Percentages



1 Employees aged 16 and over, excluding Youth Trainees and Employment Trainees. Membership includes a few people who were not sure if they were in a scheme but thought it possible.

Source: General Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics

Trends in membership of occupational pension schemes

Since 1989, trends in participation in occupational pension schemes have differed for men and women and for those working part time and full time.

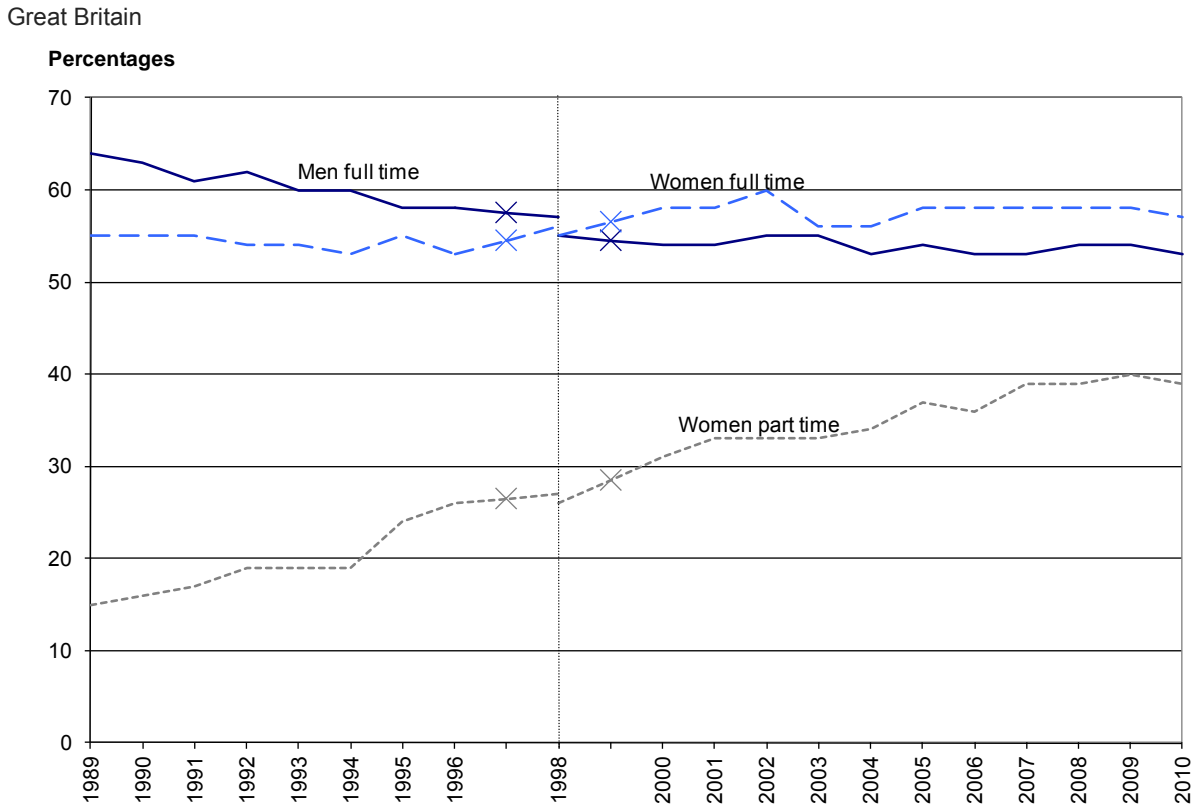
The proportion of men working full time who were members of their current employer's occupational pension scheme decreased from 64 per cent in 1989 to 54 per cent in 2000 and has remained at between 53 per cent and 55 per cent every year since then. In 2010, 53 per cent of men working full time were members of their current employer's occupational pension scheme. The percentage of women working full time who were members of their current employer's occupational pension scheme showed a different pattern, rising from 55 per cent in 1989 to 60 per cent in 2002. In 2010, 57 per cent of women working full time were members of their current employer's occupational pension scheme.

Among women working part time, the proportion who were members of their current employer's occupational pension scheme has increased from 15 per cent in 1989 to 39 per cent in 2010. This

may be partly explained by changes following a European Court of justice ruling in 1995 that made it illegal for pension schemes to exclude part-time workers.

Table 6.3, Figure 6.3

Figure 6.3 Employee¹ membership of current employer's occupational pension scheme: by sex and whether working full time or part time, 1989 to 2010^{2,3,4}



- 1 Employees aged 16 and over, excluding Youth Trainees and Employment Trainees. Membership includes a few people who were not sure if they were in a scheme but thought it possible.
- 2 2005 data includes the last quarter of 2004/05 data as the survey changed from a financial year to a calendar year. Results from 2006 onwards include longitudinal data.
- 3 For 1998 unweighted and weighted data are shown for comparison purposes. Weighted data are not available before this point.
- 4 The survey was not run in 1997/98 or 1999/00. A linear trend has been drawn between the data point before and after these years.

Source: General Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics

Personal pension arrangements among the self-employed

Personal pensions, in their current form, were first introduced in July 1988, with self-invested personal pensions starting in the early 1990s and stakeholder pensions in April 2001. In 2010, these were the only form of private pension that the self-employed could take out, although some self-employed people were still investing in retirement annuity contracts set up before 1988. The analysis in this section (and Tables 6.12 to 6.14) defines a personal pension to include stakeholder, self invested personal pensions and retirement annuities.

For full time and part time combined, self-employed men were more likely than self-employed women to have a current personal pension arrangement (34 per cent of self-employed men compared with 20 per cent of self-employed women were contributing to a personal pension in 2010). Two-fifths (40 per cent) of self-employed men had never had a personal pension compared with almost three-fifths (59 per cent) of women.

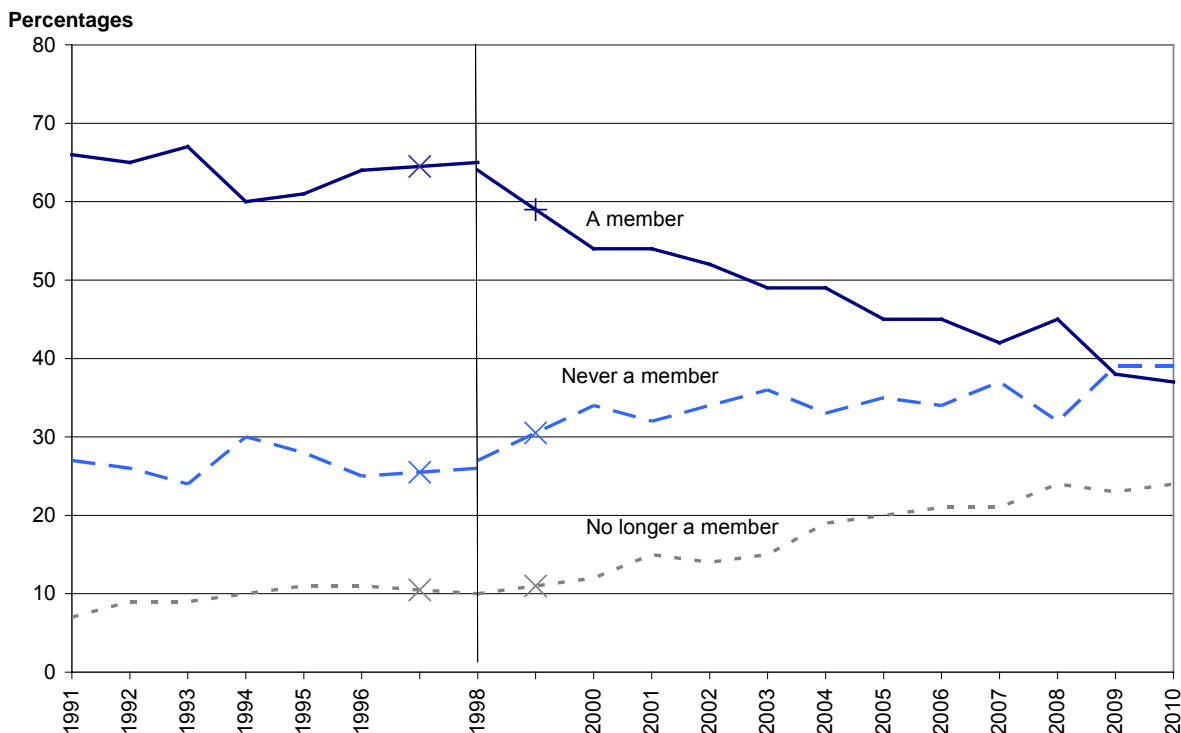
[Table 6.12](#)

Since 1991 the survey 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 2010 the proportion with a current personal pension decreased from 64 per cent to 37 per cent.

[Table 6.13](#), [Figure 6.4](#)

Figure 6.4 Membership of a personal pension scheme¹ for self-employed men working full time, 1991 to 2010^{2,3,4}

Great Britain



- 1 A personal pension is defined to include personal pensions, stakeholder pensions and retirement annuities; personal pensions may include SIPPs
- 2 2005 data includes the last quarter of 2004/05 data as the survey changed from a financial year to a calendar year. Results from 2006 onwards include longitudinal data.
- 3 For 1998 unweighted and weighted data are shown for comparison purposes. Weighted data are not available before this point.
- 4 The survey was not run in 1997/98 or 1999/00. A linear trend has been drawn between the data point before and after these years.

Source: *General Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics*

References

- 1 Department for Work and Pensions website (2012) for policy information on workplace pension reforms: www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/pensions-reform/workplace-pension-reforms/
- 2 Department for Work and Pensions website (2012) for Pensions Act 2008: www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/pensions-reform/the-pensions-act-2008
- 3 The Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2012) publication *Pensions Trends* draws together statistics from ONS, a number of government departments and other organisations to highlight the complex issues that shape trends in pension provision in the UK: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/our-statistics/publications/pension-trends/index.html

Chapter 7: General Health

General health

The General Lifestyle Survey (GLF) and its predecessor the General Household Survey (GHS) have included a series of questions on health since 1971. Although periodic changes have been made to the content of the health section, it is possible to monitor changes in health over a 40 year period. This chapter presents information on recent trends over time in self-reported health and data for the 2010 survey year.

How the data are used and their importance

GLF health data are used by government departments, health organisations and charities to make informed decisions on policies and related programmes and projects. ONS and academic institutes also use the data to conduct research on different aspects of health including: health expectancy; health related risk factors and inequalities in health. The Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) publish information on the various research projects that have used GLF data. This information can be downloaded from the [ESDS website](#)¹.

This report includes statistics produced directly from the GLF. However, GLF data are combined with other sources in the computation of key health indicators. For example, self-assessed general health and limiting longstanding illness statistics from the GLF are used in the calculation of official national health expectancies, and experimental health expectancy statistics

National health expectancies have been calculated since 1981 and are updated annually; these data are freely accessible via the ONS website². Experimental health expectancy statistics using GLF survey data are produced on an ad-hoc basis and focus on methodological issues such as health inequalities across areas experiencing differing extents of ecological deprivation. These experimental statistics have featured as published peer-reviewed articles in [Health Statistics Quarterly \(HSQ\)](#)³. The final edition of HSQ was published in February 2012 but these peer-reviewed experimental statistics will continue to be published directly on the ONS web-site⁴.

Trends and comparisons of national health expectancies feature routinely in ONS publications such as [Social Trends](#)⁵, [Pension Trends](#)⁶, [United Kingdom Health Statistics](#)⁷ and [Focus on Older People](#)⁸. Health expectancies are used by the Department of Health (DH), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). DH uses the statistics in monitoring health inequalities and in targeting health resources. DEFRA uses the health expectancy indicators for monitoring progress in Sustainable Development (SD 50) in the UK. DWP uses the statistics as indicators for healthy active living beyond retirement; the data are an important source for understanding life expectancy in the context of healthy aging and inform options for pension reform.

The results

The analysis in this chapter shows results for self-assessed general health, longstanding illness or disability, acute sickness and details of longstanding health conditions. The results are based on responses from adults aged 16 and over living in private households in Great Britain (excluding institutions, such as nursing homes). Health information is also collected from a responsible adult about all children in the household.

Self-assessed general health

Self-assessed general health is used as a measure for predicting future health outcomes and is therefore an important source for planning future health services.

In 2008 the self-assessed general health question (relating to health over the previous 12 months) which had three possible responses; 'good', 'fairly good' or 'not good', was replaced with a new question. The new question asks respondents how their health is in general and has five possible responses; 'very good', 'good', 'fair', 'bad' or 'very bad'. The new question was first added to the survey in 2005 and is harmonised with national surveys across the European Union. This section reports on the responses to this question.

It should be noted that to allow comparisons between the two general health questions, both were included on the GHS (and asked of all adults) between 2005 and 2007, with the three-category question asked first. This means that responses during this period may be subject to bias caused by question exposure/order effects, for example, where adults who might have otherwise responded 'very good' to the five-category question, could have responded 'good' in line with the highest category of the three-category question. This might explain the notable change in the percentages between the 'very good' and 'good' categories between 2007 and 2008. Therefore, care should be taken if drawing conclusions concerning this change.

Between 2005 and 2008, the proportion of adults aged 16 and over reporting very good or good general health increased from 75 per cent to 79 per cent and has remained at this level since. The proportion of adults reporting bad or very bad general health ranged from 5 per cent to 7 per cent between 2005 and 2010. In 2010, 39 per cent of adults said their health was very good, 40 per cent reported good health, 15 per cent reported they had fair health, 5 per cent reported they had bad health and 1 per cent said their health was very bad.

[Table 7.1](#)

Longstanding and limiting longstanding illness or disability

Respondents to the GLF are asked whether they have a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity. Those who report a longstanding illness (which includes any disability or infirmity) are then asked if this limits their activities in any way. Data on longstanding illness and limiting longstanding illness include both adults and children. It should be noted that the estimates are based on the respondents own assessment of their health, or the health of children in their care. Therefore changes over time may reflect changes in people's expectations of their health as well as changes in incidence or duration of sickness. In addition, different sub-groups of the population may have varying expectations, activities and capacities of adaptation.

Results in this section are presented from 2006, reflecting the first year of the longitudinal component of the survey. Commentary on trends prior to 2006 can be found in earlier editions of the GLF/GHS reports (available to download from the ONS website).

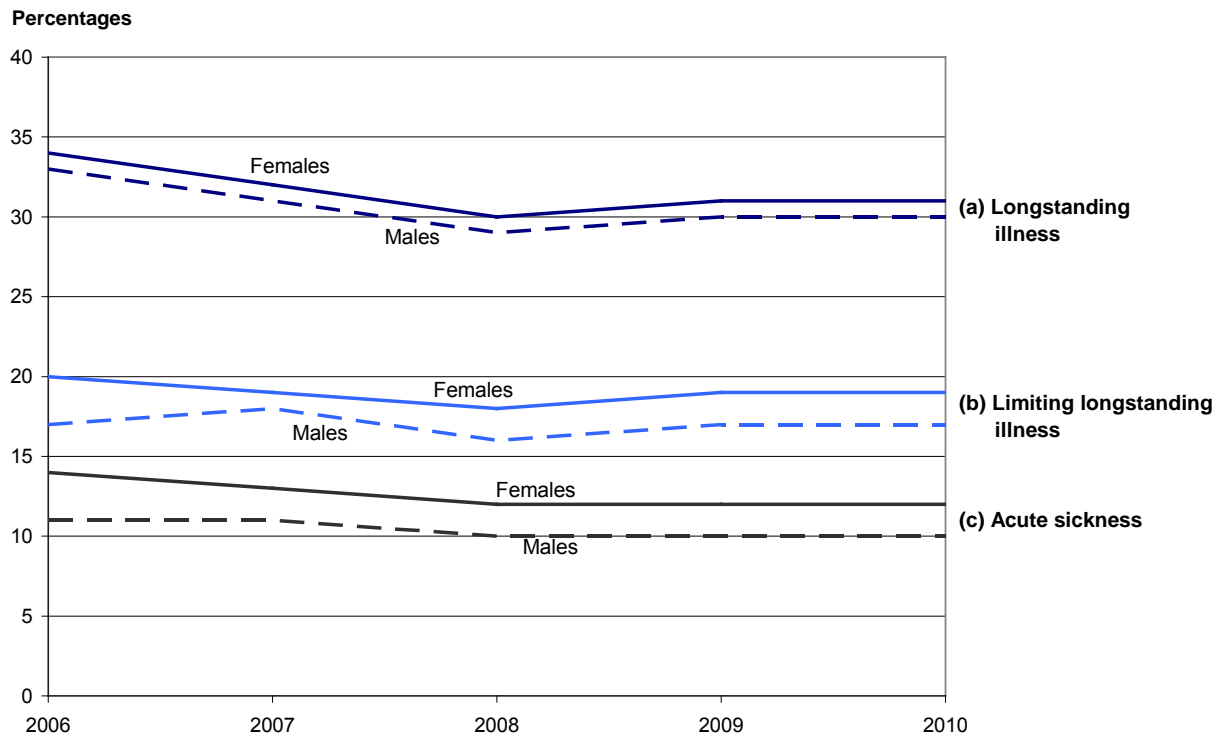
Over the five year period from 2006 to 2010 there was a three percentage point fall in the prevalence of longstanding illness among both males and females. In 2006, 33 per cent of males and 34 per cent of females reported having a longstanding illness compared with 30 per cent of males and 31 per cent of females in 2010. Over the same period there was only a marginal fall in the proportion of males and females (combined) with a limiting long-standing illness – 19 per cent in 2006, compared to 18 per cent in 2010.

In 2010, as in all previous years, the prevalence of both longstanding and limiting longstanding illness increased with age. This increase was particularly marked among those aged 45 and over. The 45 to 64 age group were more than twice as likely (41 per cent) to report a longstanding illness than those aged 16 to 44 (19 per cent). Among those aged 65 to 74, 56 per cent reported a longstanding illness compared with 68 per cent of those aged 75 and over. The proportions reporting a limiting longstanding illness were: 11 per cent (aged 16 to 44); 23 per cent (aged 45 to 64); 34 per cent (aged 65 to 74); and 48 per cent (aged 75 and over).

[Table 7.2](#); [Figure 7.1](#)

Figure 7.1 Percentage of males and females reporting (a) longstanding illness (b) limiting longstanding illness (c) acute sickness, 2006 to 2010¹

Great Britain



¹ Results for 2006 to 2010 include longitudinal data

Source: General Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics

Prevalence of both long-standing and limiting long-standing illness varies by the socio-economic status of the Household Reference Person (HRP). The socio-economic classification (NS-SEC) used in this report is based on information about occupation and employment status (see [Appendix A, Definitions and terms](#) for further information). [Tables 7.4 to 7.6](#) present data using NS-SEC and three main groupings: managerial and professional, intermediate, and routine and manual occupations.

In 2010 people living in households where the HRP was in a routine or manual occupation group had the highest prevalence of long-standing illness (34 per cent of males and 36 per cent of females). They were followed by the intermediate group (30 per cent of males and 33 per cent of females) and the managerial and professional group (26 per cent of both males and females). The difference between people in households with the HRP in intermediate occupation groups compared to people in households with the HRP in managerial and professional occupation groups was only statistically significant for males.

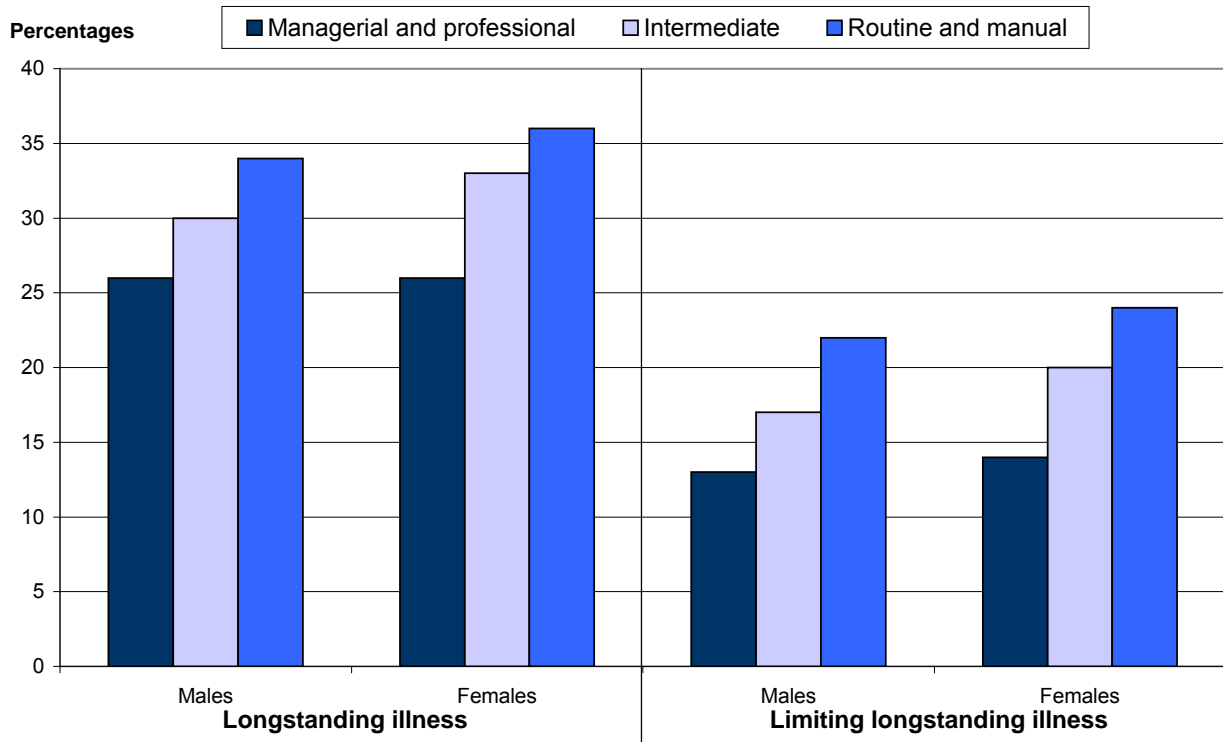
A similar trend was evident among people who reported a limiting long-standing illness. Males and females living in households where the HRP was in a routine and manual occupation group were most likely to report a limiting long-standing illness (22 per cent of males and 24 per cent of

females); followed by the intermediate group (17 per cent of males and 20 per cent of females); and the managerial and professional group (13 per cent of males and 14 per cent of females).

[Tables 7.4 and 7.5](#); [Figure 7.2](#)

Figure 7.2 Prevalence of longstanding and limiting longstanding illness by sex and socio-economic classification of household reference person, 2010

Great Britain



Source: General Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics

Table 7.10 presents results by Government Office Region. The southernmost regions of England generally had lower prevalence of longstanding and limiting longstanding illness than the northernmost regions. In the North East and North West of England, 36 per cent of people reported having a longstanding illness in 2010, compared with 25 per cent in London, 28 per cent in the South East and 31 per cent in the South West. A similar picture was apparent for limiting longstanding illness. In the North East, 24 per cent of people reported having a limiting longstanding illness and 21 per cent of people in the North West. This compares with 15 per cent of people in London and 16 per cent in the South East. Due to the small sample sizes many of the regional differences were not statistically significant.

[Table 7.10](#)

Acute Sickness

Acute sickness is defined as any illness or injury that has caused a person to cut down on their normal activities in the last two weeks. Data on acute sickness were collected for both adults and children.

Over the most recent five year period, the proportion of people reporting acute sickness decreased from 13 per cent in 2006 to 11 per cent in 2010. As in previous years, the prevalence of acute sickness in 2010 was greater for females (12 per cent) than for males (10 per cent). Those in households where the HRP was in a routine or manual occupation group were more likely than those in households where the HRP was in the managerial and professional group to report an acute sickness (11 per cent of males and 13 per cent of females, compared with 9 per cent of males and 10 per cent of females).

Respondents who reported an acute sickness were also asked how many days their activities were restricted for. The average number of restricted activity days per person per year due to illness or injury generally increased with age. In 2010 people aged 65 to 74 had (on average) more than twice as many restricted activity days per year (39 days) than those aged 16 to 44 (18 days). Working men and women had (on average) far fewer days restricted activity per year (23 days for men and 25 days for women) than men and women who were economically inactive (59 days for men and 52 days for women).

[Tables 7.2, 7.3, 7.6 and 7.7](#)

Details of longstanding conditions

Respondents aged 16 and over who reported a longstanding illness or condition were asked to provide further details in order that their illness and/or condition could be classified according to chapter headings of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10). This classification is based on the symptoms of the illness or condition, rather than the cause.

Similar to previous years of the survey, the most common conditions reported in 2010 were musculoskeletal problems (128 per 1,000) and conditions of the heart and circulatory system (109 per 1,000). Women were more likely than men to report musculoskeletal problems (152 per 1,000 compared with 104 per 1,000). This was largely due to differences in rates of arthritis and rheumatism (84 per 1,000 for women and 45 per 1,000 for men).

For the majority of longstanding conditions there was a higher prevalence amongst older compared to younger people. A condition of the musculoskeletal system was reported at a rate of 47 per 1,000 for those aged 16 to 44, compared with a rate of 329 per 1,000 for those aged 75 and over. While 18 per 1,000 people in the 16 to 44 age group reported a heart and circulatory system condition, the corresponding rate among those aged 75 and over was 333 per 1,000. The notable exceptions were mental disorders – a rate of 37 and 40 per 1,000 for those aged 16 to 44 and 45

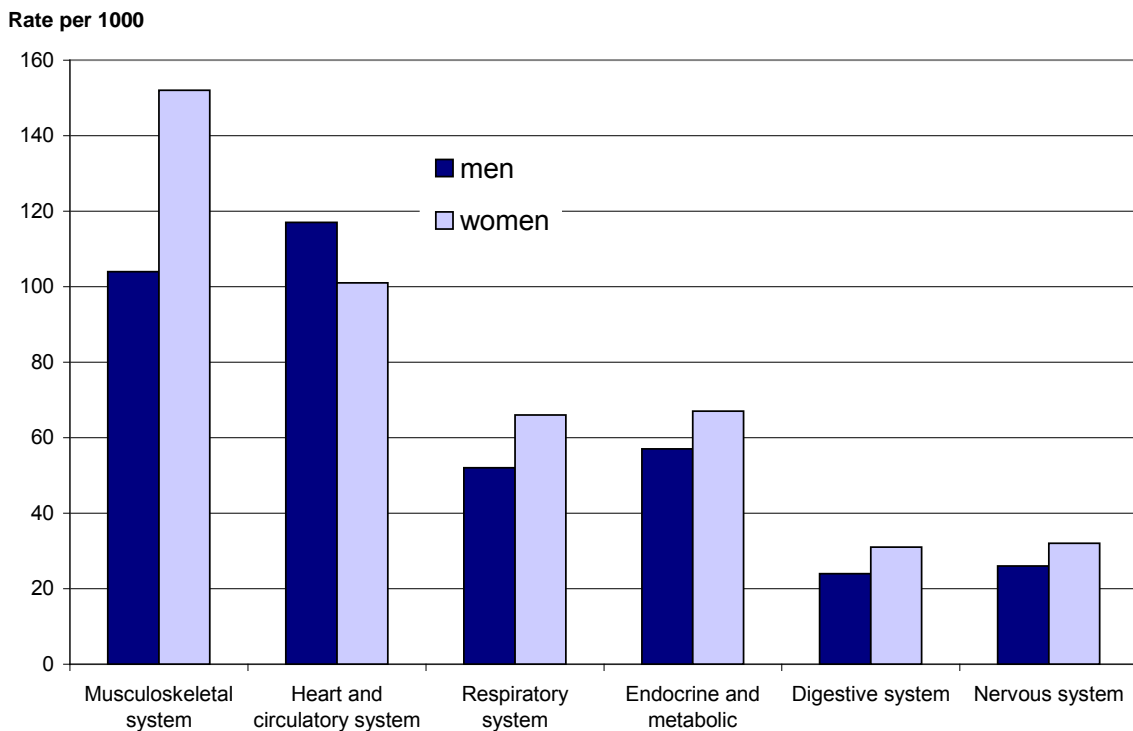
to 64 respectively, compared with a rate of 15 and 18 per 1,000 for those aged 65 to 74 and 75 and over respectively; and also skin complaints.

Prevalence of longstanding conditions varied by the socio-economic status of the Household Reference Person (HRP). Adults in households where the HRP was in the managerial and professional occupational grouping had the lowest rate of musculoskeletal (88 per 1,000) and heart and circulatory (84 in 1,000) problems. Adults in households where the HRP was in the semi-routine and routine grouping were the most likely to report a musculoskeletal condition (184 in 1,000). Of all those reporting a longstanding illness, adults in households where the HRP was in the managerial and professional group reported the lowest average number of conditions 1.45, compared with 1.62 in the Intermediate group and 1.72 in the semi-routine and routine group.

[Tables 7.11, 7.12, 7.14 and 7.15](#); **Figure 7.3**

Figure 7.3 Rate per 1000 reporting longstanding condition groups, by sex, 2010

Great Britain



Source: *General Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics*

References

- 1 The Economic and Social Data Service webpage on the usage of the General Lifestyle Survey (2011): www.esds.ac.uk/government/ghs/usage/
- 2 The Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2011) webpage for Health Expectancy statistics: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Health+Expectancy
- 3 ONS (2012) Health Statistics Quarterly release, available at: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?newquery=health+statistics+quarterly
- 4 ONS (2012) website homepage: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html
- 5 ONS (2011) Social Trends release, available at: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?newquery=Social+trends
- 6 ONS (2012) Pension Trends publication, available at: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/our-statistics/publications/pension-trends/index.html
- 7 ONS (2010) United Kingdom Health Statistics release, available at: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?pageSize=50&newquery=United+Kingdom+Health+Statistics
- 8 ONS (2011) Focus on Older people release, available at: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?newquery=Focus+On+Older+People

Reference to technical appendices

The General Lifestyle Survey is supported by a number of technical appendices that provide information about the methodology that is used on the survey.

A. Definitions and Terms

B. Sample Design and Response

C. Sampling Errors

D. Weighting

E. Household and Individual Questionnaires

F. Summary of main topics included in GHS/GLF questionnaires: 1971 to 2010

The appendices can be accessed via the ONS website:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ghs/general-lifestyle-survey/2010/index.html>