

UK mothers having fewer children, older

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Over the last two decades women in Britain had fewer children than they originally intended, according to a study by the ESRC Centre for Population Change at the University of Southampton, published today in the ONS publication *Population Trends*.

Between 1991 and 2007 [women](#) were asked how many children they intended to have. Average intended family size was consistently higher than the actual average fertility rate throughout that period. Mean intended family size ranged between 2.0 and 2.16 children per woman. The actual fertility rate was around 0.3-0.4 children per woman lower until 2001, but the gap between intended family size and overall fertility has since narrowed.

Between 1991 and 1994, childless women who said they would probably have a birth in the next 10 years were also asked at what age they expected to have their first child. These findings were then compared with actual ages at first birth for a comparable sample of women ten years older in 2001-04. Women expected on average to have their first child at a younger age than actually proved to be the case. Women aged 22-25 in 1991-94 expected on average to have a child within 3.9 years - the actual average wait was 4.5 years. For women aged 30-33, the anticipated two-year wait for a first child became 3.5 years on average.

Overall, there is a degree of uncertainty about fertility intentions for women throughout their childbearing years, including a significant minority of women who do not make firm decisions about future childbearing.

The latest edition of the quarterly ONS journal *Population Trends* has been produced in association with the ESRC Centre for Population Change (CPC), a joint initiative between the University of Southampton and a consortium of Scottish universities. An introductory article gives an overview of the Centre's research activities in partnership with ONS and the General Register Office for Scotland.

A further article by CPC researchers examines factors associated with residential mobility among men and women aged 50 and over, using data from the British Household Panel Study. Those in late middle age (50-59) and the oldest-old (90 and over) were found to be most likely to move. Migration was strongly associated with changes in partnership, health and economic status in the previous 12 months. Since divorce and remarriage have become more common in later life, 'relationship driven migration' is likely to become more important, adding a new category to the classical typology of later life migration.

Also published in today's *Population Trends*, reporting on research from the ESRC Centre for Population Change:

- National and international graduate migration flows
- The demographic characteristics and economic activity patterns of carers over 50: evidence from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing
- A comparison of official population projections with Bayesian time series forecasts for England and Wales

Other articles include:

- Change in living arrangements following death of a partner in England and Wales, 1971 to 2001
- A cross country review of the validation and/or adjustment of census data
- An analysis of patient register data in the longitudinal study- what does

it tell us about the quality of the data?

More information: *Population Trends* 141 is available at www.statistics.gov.uk/populationtrends/ptissue

Provided by University of Southampton

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