

Evidence Request Bank

Development Project

EVIDENCE RESPONSE

SUMMARY

Family households:

How have family households in Scotland changed over 2001-2011?

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Parenting across Scotland requested the Evidence Request Bank¹ for an evidence response to the question 'How have family households in Scotland changed over 2001-2011?'

This Summary brings together the summary and concluding points from the report produced by the Evidence Request Bank.

The full report (published April 2014) from the Evidence Request Bank contains useful up-to-date and accurate information about family households in Scotland, which service providers can use to ensure that children and families receive the services and support they need.

As well as a broad overview of the changing shape of the family household between 2001 and 2011, the report considers the evidence base and availability of data about:

- Different family types including lone parent families, grandparent-headed families, step-families, adoptive families, fostering families, families affected by prison and families affected by disability
- Main issues affecting families and children such as the number and ages of children in households, parental working patterns, relationship breakdown, children in care, kinship care and ethnicity

The report:

- Presents main points showing trends and changes in family households across Scotland
- Gives an overview of available evidence and notes data sources and gaps in evidence
- Presents findings under the headings: households and families; family formation and dissolution; children in need of care; families affected by disability and parental working patterns

¹ The Evidence Request Bank Development Project is a partnership of the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships, West Lothian Council, Parenting across Scotland, Children in Scotland, and the Scottish Government. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, with additional funding from the Scottish Government and Parenting across Scotland: <http://evidencerequestbank.org>

Summary points

1. Households and families

Number of households: there were 2.4 million households in Scotland in 2011; an increase of 0.2 million, 8 percentage points, since 2001. Over this period, the increase in the number of households was greater than the increase in population resulting in larger numbers of smaller households. There was an increase in those living alone.

Type of household: increases in the number of people living alone resulted in single person households being the most common household type in 2011. Whilst married couple households were the most common household type in 2001, the trend towards single person households, together with more cohabiting couple households, resulted in decreased levels of married/civil partner households. Levels of lone parent households remained stable in this period.

Family households: the proportion of all households classed as family households fell from 62% in 2001 to 60% in 2011. Married/civil partner couple households remained the most common type of family household between 2001 and 2011. However, their levels, as a proportion of all family households fell over this period because of increasing levels of cohabiting couple family households.

Dependent children: in 2011, 26% of households included dependent children a decrease of two percentage points from 2001. A total of one million dependent children were living in 614,000 family households in 2011, with married/civil partner family households more likely to have children than cohabiting couple households. The trend towards smaller households saw increasing levels of family households with only one dependent child, with almost a third of children growing up in a household without siblings. Levels of family households with two or more dependent children fell.

Minority ethnic groups: the proportion of the total population of Scotland describing themselves as 'white Scottish' fell by four percentage points between 2001 and 2011. This was mainly attributable to increases in the population of both non-British white minority ethnic groups and non-white minority ethnic groups. Levels of both groups, as a proportion of the total population, doubled from 2% to 4% for each group over the period.

2. Family formation and dissolution

Marriage: levels of marriage remained relatively stable between 2001 and 2011 fluctuating at around 30,000 per year. In 2011, 29,135 marriages took place in Scotland, a decrease of approximately 2% from 2001. Delays in marrying, with more couples cohabiting before marriage and more remarriages, meant that the average age at marriage increased between 2001 and 2011 from 34.8 to 37 for men and 32.3 to 34.5 for women.

Civil partnerships: in 2011, 554 civil partnerships were registered in Scotland. Following their introduction by the Civil Partnership Act 2004, 2011 was the first year to show an increase in the number of civil partnership registrations following four consecutive annual decreases from the peak of 1,047 registrations in 2006.

Births: following a record low in 2001, the average number of births to childbearing women increased, peaking in 2008, before gradually declining to 2011. Despite a decline from 2008, the number of births and the total fertility² rate in 2011 remained higher than in 2001. The pattern of delayed child-bearing, with fertility rates highest for women aged 25-29 and 30-34, continued between 2001 and 2011. Reflecting decreasing numbers of married couple families and increasing levels of cohabitation, the number of births registered to married parents decreased, with slightly over half of all births in 2011 being registered to unmarried parents.

Adoptions: there was a 6% increase in the number of adoptions recorded in Scotland between 2001 and 2011.

Divorces and dissolutions: 9,862 divorces were granted in Scotland in 2011, a decrease of 7% from 2001. Forty-four dissolutions of civil partnerships were granted in 2011, the fourth consecutive year of increases following the first dissolutions granted in 2007.

3. Children in need of care

Looked after children: at July 2011 there were 16,231 looked after children in Scotland, an increase of 49% since 2001. In both 2001 and 2011 the majority of looked after children were cared for in the family home. Numbers of looked after children staying with foster carers, prospective adopters or in other community placements rose between 2001 and 2011, whilst numbers of looked after children staying in residential care fell.

Kinship care: in Scotland in 2001, just over 1% of all children were in kinship care. Of these children, the vast majority were in informal kinship care with only a small minority in formal kinship care. In 2011 the number of children in formal kinship care was nearly four times that of 2001.

4. Families affected by disability

Levels of disability remained stable between 2001 and 2011, with one in five people in Scotland living with a long-term activity-limiting health problem.

Dependent children: in both 2001 and 2011 few households with someone with a long-term health problem or disability contained dependent children.

Carers: the proportion of people providing unpaid care to family members or friends remained stable between 2001 and 2011. The number of hours spent providing care, however, increased.

² The total fertility rate is a measure of the number of children women have over their childbearing years and is a statistical summary resulting in a number between 1 and 2, but of course, nobody has a fraction of a child.

4. Parental working patterns

In 2011, 74% of working age men and 64% of working age women were economically active, respective increases of two and five percentage points from 2001.

Full-time and part-time employment: levels of part-time and full-time employment increased between 2001 and 2011 for both men and women. However, there remained significant differences in the type of economic activity undertaken, with women remaining far more likely to be in part-time employment, and far less likely to be in full-time employment, than men. Women with children remained much more likely to work part-time than women without children.

Home and family: whilst levels of economic inactivity decreased for both men and women between 2001 and 2011, proportions of those who were economically inactive through looking after the home or family increased for both. The proportion of men undertaking this role increased from 1% in 2001 to 3% in 2011. Women, however, remained far more likely to be looking after the home or family than men. In 2011, women were six times more likely to fulfil this role than men.

Lone parents: consistent with broader trends, levels of economic activity and the number of hours worked by lone parents increased notably between 2001 and 2011 for both men and women. However, lone mothers remained considerably more likely to be in part-time employment, and less likely to be in full-time employment, than lone fathers.

Conclusions

The evidence shows both stability and change across family households in Scotland between 2001 and 2011.

Households and families: there were significant changes in household composition and family forms. There has been a trend towards smaller but more numerous households with one person households becoming the most common type of household in 2011. At the same time, increasing numbers of cohabiting couples contributed to a notable decline in married couple households. The trend towards smaller households meant fewer households with dependent children. Within households with dependent children, the numbers with only one dependent child increased.

Family formation and dissolution: fertility levels increased, peaking in 2008, before gradually declining. Fertility rates in 2011, however, remained higher than the record lows in 2001. Decreasing levels of marriage and increasing levels of cohabitation meant a significant increase in the number of births registered to cohabiting parents and a corresponding decrease in births registered to married parents. Over half of all births in 2011 were registered to unmarried parents. Marriages fell slightly over the period but fluctuated at around 30,000 per year, whilst the number of divorces fell by 7%. The introduction of the Civil Partnership Act 2004 was an important development which provided for the registration and dissolution of same-sex partnerships.

Children in need of care: the most striking change between 2001 and 2011 was the marked increase in the number of looked after children, which rose from 10,897 to 16,231, an increase of 49%. In both 2001 and 2011, most looked after children remained in the family home. There was a trend towards looked after children being cared for in 'other community settings' which included staying with relatives or friends, indicating increasing levels of kinship care. Whilst a lack of available evidence made detailed consideration of changes in kinship care over this period difficult, there was a notable rise in levels of formal kinship care, with nearly four times as many children living in formal kinship care than in 2001.

Families affected by disability: the levels of those living with a long-term illness or disability and of those providing unpaid care to family members or friends remained stable between 2001 and 2011: one in five people were living with a long-term illness or disability, and approximately one in ten were providing unpaid care. The amount of time spent by unpaid carers providing care changed, with the proportion of carers providing 20 or more hours of care a week increasing by seven percentage points.

Parental working patterns: between 2001 and 2011 there was an increase in levels of economic activity and the number of hours worked for both men and women of working age. Notable differences remained, however, in the type of employment undertaken by men and women. Women were considerably more likely to engage in part-time employment, and less likely to engage in full-time employment, than men. The same trend was seen when comparing women with children and women without children. The former were far more likely to be in part-time employment and less likely to be in full-time employment than the latter. Whilst levels of economic inactivity decreased for both men and women between 2001 and 2011, the reasons for such inactivity continued to exhibit stark gender differences. In 2011, women were almost six times as likely to be economically inactive because of looking after the home or family as men.

End note

PAS hopes that this evidence will increase knowledge about families in Scotland, that it will have a positive impact on how families are supported.

The Evidence Request Bank is developing a service to help third and public sector organisations and services in Scotland to access and use social research evidence.

Family households: how have family households in Scotland changed over 2001-2011? is available to download at <http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/policy--research/research/parenting-studies.aspx>

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