

## **What evidence is there of diversity in family and household patterns in contemporary UK society?**

*Definition* - According to web definition family can be defined as a group of people gathered and living together in one house. Usually each member of the family is related by marriage, blood or else he or she is adopted.<sup>1</sup>

According to Sarah Irwin “*a trend towards a ‘modern life course’ that reached its peak in the 1960s and 1970s has been, in certain respects, modified since the late 1970s.*”<sup>2</sup> The statement above illustrated that there was once a modern family where there wasn’t a major deal of difference people’s family lives. But now there has been a rapid change among people since everyone in this present century is delaying marriage, behaving differently or against marriage. Although, Carol Smart point out that “*during marriage, most fathers only relate to their children through the mother*”<sup>3</sup>. Smart is trying to tell us that the married ones are divorcing which makes the role of fatherhood complicated or they are not divorcing but there is a lack of direct communication amongst the father and the children because the father only communicates to their children via the mother.

Table showing: A reduction in the average age of marriage:<sup>4</sup>

<b>Years</b>	<b>Marital status</b>
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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.campaignforlearning.org.uk/familylearningnetwork/aboutus/definition.asp> (Assessed on 6-november-2008 )

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Irwin, Workshop Paper 7b, Available at: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/CAVA/papers/wsp7b.pdf> (Assessed on 6-november-2008 )

<sup>3</sup> Abercrombie, N. and Warde, A., (2001), Family and households in *The Contemporary British Society Reader*, (eds), Cambridge: Policy Press, p6

<sup>4</sup> Chris Livesey <http://www.sociology.org.uk/fdiverse.doc> (Assessed on 7-november-2008 )

1931	26% married.
1951	48% married.
1961	59% married.

The table above illustrate that there has been a reduction in the average age of marriage according to Richard Leete who has noted the changes of marital status of women aged 20 - 24:

Table showing age at first marriage for both male and female<sup>5</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1975</b>
<b>Men</b>	27yrs old	25yrs old
<b>Women</b>	26yrs old	23yrs old

There is increase in numbers of women marrying younger, e.g. as illustrated in the table above,

The age of marriage has reduced in men by 2 years while in female by 3 years.

Factors which might influence these decisions include, social class/status, i.e.

- Upper class males and females tend, on average, to marry slightly later in their life-cycle than people of other classes.
- Amongst all women, those most likely to remain single come from the upper / upper middle classes.

Other factors which might influence family's decision include, i.e. contraception and social attitudes towards a family set up:

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<sup>5</sup> Chris Livesey <http://www.sociology.org.uk/fdiverse.doc> (Assessed on 6-november-2008 )

- The increasing availability of contraception has meant that sexually-active couples can be more easily planned and practise safely.
- Social attitudes towards a family setup: - decline in average family size over the past 100 years alone, has change the view that people do not have to delay marriage in order to ensure that they can support a larger family.

Having read the Abercrombie book, it is understood that the family and households patterns is dramatically changing in relation to our current family lives, one can see that there has been a change within a family toward one another, i.e. motivation and bonding amongst most families are decreasing perhaps this might be due to economy, status, contraception or peoples perception of family.

A lot of today's homes consist of a single-parent family and reconstituted. Nowadays, there is only one essential type of family structure of which is known as normal, good and socially important. What is certain is that the economy has a big impact on family and household pattern. i.e. the introduction of working women in all sector has a major part to play, as the number and proportion of women who are able and willing to pursue a career outside the family increases, the average age of marriage for these women has also increased. This observation applies particularly to middle-class, professional, women who appear to be delaying marriage / family life until they have established a professional career to which they can return following childbirth.

**Bibliography***Internet*

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