

# **Household Change - Scotland in a European Setting**

## **A literature review and analysis**

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the General Register Office for Scotland.

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

1. This work summarises part of an investigation into the 2001 Census question ‘The Relationship Matrix’<sup>1</sup> carried out by the author for an MSc thesis. It describes family trends and notes the potential effect of the Matrix on the data and the interpretation of such trends.
2. The Relationship Matrix data was obtained in the 2001 Census by asking that information be provided on the relationship of each person in the household to others in the same household. For households with up to 5 people in them, information was required on their relationship with the remaining people in the household. For example, in a 5 person household, for person 3 on the form, information was needed on their relationship with persons 1, 2, 4 and 5. Where a household contained 6 or more people, the same information was still required for the first 5 people in the household. For the remaining household residents (persons 6 and above), information was needed on their relationship with person 1 and with the two people given just before them on the form. For example, person 6 was required to give their relationship with persons 4 and 5 as well as person 1.
3. The Relationship Matrix data collected in 2001 was significantly more detailed than the information collected in the 1991 Census, where each person was only required to say what their relationship was to the first person on the Census form (person 1).
4. The 2001 Relationship Matrix evaluation data is complex so the evaluation is quite complicated and this paper is just one part. It provides a social context for an Occasional Paper on the statistical evaluation of the success of the relationship matrix. Two published papers have already provided summary evaluations of the matrix (Máté 1993 and Máté and Miller 2003).
5. Over the last 30 years there have been many changes in Scotland’s households. The traditional family household - a couple with a child or children - is less common now, while there has been an increase in one person and lone parent households. Concomitantly, there has been a significant decrease in the average household size and a corresponding increase in the total number of households over the last 30 years. These trends are expected to continue. The Scottish Executive (2006) projects an average household size of only 1.97 by 2024 - compared to 4.82 in 1901.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files/hseform.pdf> pages 4 and 5

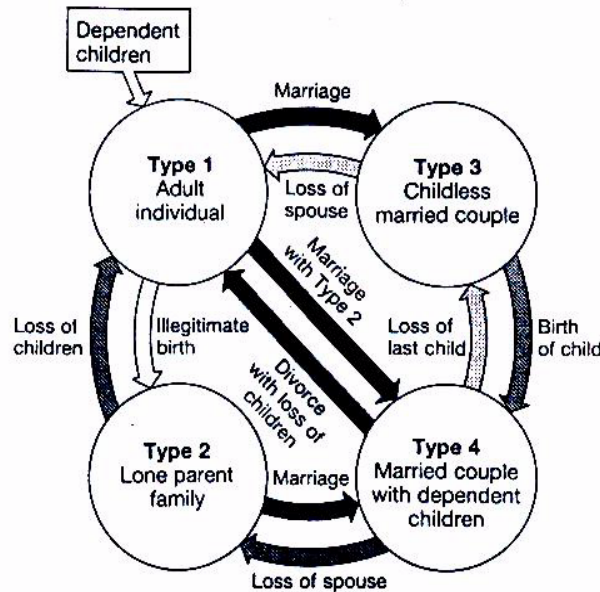
6. These trends have also been observed across the rest of the UK and Europe to varying degrees, in what has been termed the “pluralisation of households” (Coleman and Salt 1992). Classifying households has become increasingly complex. Many developments in social policy rely on baseline information from the Census. With devolution and the rate and direction of demographic change in Scotland compared to the rest of the UK, there is increasing interest in and reliance on the accuracy of Census information on families and households, and to distinguish Scotland’s household patterns and trends from those of England and Wales.
7. This paper, in the form of a literature review of work over the last 30 years with statistical data, describes how Scotland’s households have changed over time and compares Scotland to the rest of the UK and Europe. The information boxes contain Census results.

## **2 CHANGING SCOTLAND**

### **2.1 Introduction**

8. “Households used to be created by marriage and dissolved by death – in between there were children” (Weeks, 1996). This is no longer true of all today’s households, whose creation does not require marriage and whose dissolution does not require death. Children now live in many different household types and a variety of family units.
9. This increasing diversity and complexity in household types (Figure 1) has been attributed to the following demographic factors:-
  - Delay in marriage / increasing number of late marriages;
  - Decrease in the marriage rate;
  - Increase in co-habitation;
  - Increase in illegitimacy;
  - Increase in the divorce rate; and
  - Decrease in the fertility rate.

**Figure 1 The minimal household unit family life cycle (Coleman & Salt, 1992)**



10. As a result of these changes, the “traditional” household - consisting of a married couple with child(ren) - is no longer the statistical norm. It has given way to lone parent households (in particular female-headed households), single person households, and unmarried person households (whether widowed, divorced, never married or co-habiting). This paper compares these changes - described as the increasing “pluralisation” of Scottish households - with the rest of the UK and Ireland over the last 20 or 30 years.

**2.2 30 years of household change in Scotland**

**Change in Scotland from 1971 to 2001**

- The total number of households increased from 1,698,340 to 2,192,246.
- The total population decreased from 5,113,280 to 5,062,011.
- The average age of the Scottish population increased from 31 to 38.
- The number of marriages fell from 43,000 to 30,000, and an increasing proportion of these marriages were between non-Scottish residents at Gretna Green.
- The average age of first marriage for women rose from 22 to 28.
- The general fertility rate per 1,000 females aged 15-44 fell from 85.8 to 48.8 births.
- The number of divorces per year rose from 6,500 to 11,000.
- The average size of the household decreased from 2.92 to 2.27.
- The percentage of single person households which had a person of pensionable age fell from 67% in both 1971 and 1981 to 55% in 1991 and 46% in 2001.

11. Possible reasons for these changes are summarised.

### *Changing household size and structure*

12. Researchers have found that when women have children, their potential ability to earn as much as men sharply decreases (Coleman & Salt, 1992; Lewis, 1997, 2001; Clarke & Henwood, 1997, Kennedy & McCormack 1997), despite measures to prevent discrimination against employees due to gender and marital status (e.g. the Equal Pay Act 1970, Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Employment Act 1989 and Employment Rights Act 1996).
13. In conjunction with reduced earning ability, researchers (e.g. Clarke & Henwood, 1997) also suggest that the expense involved in child raising, the increased effectiveness and availability of contraception and the perceived constraints that marriage and children bring, have led many young women to opt for the single life (with or without children) or to form a couple but not have children. Both these choices will reduce the average household size.
14. Scotland is one of many countries in Europe with a rapidly ageing population. An ageing population also reduces household size, and there has been a rapid expansion in the number of people over the age of 65 and women over the age of 75. In addition, because of changes in lifestyle and advances in medical science the number of fit and healthy pensioners is rising with an increase in the number of households containing a person of pensionable age. Although the number of one person households consisting of a person of pensionable age has increased between 1981 and 2001, it has increased by less than other age groups. As a result, the proportion of one person households which consist of pensioners actually fell between 1981 and 2001. This is likely to reflect people living longer, resulting in more households consisting of pensioner couples rather than single pensioners.

### *Decreasing Fertility Rate*

15. Scott (1999) argued that the importance of fertility rate change has been exaggerated and is not of great significance when combined with the decreasing rate of infant mortality; while the rate of fertility has fallen significantly, the population as a whole has not - but this may be due to other factors such as increasing longevity.
16. Other social scientists, such as Clarke and Henwood in their work on lone parent families in Britain, argue that it is not so much the number of women having children that is changing but the increasing age at which they start having children, and, consequently the total number of pregnancies is dropping (Clarke & Henwood, 1997). The increasing age at first marriage and at first pregnancy has increased the fertility rate amongst women aged 40+. However, perhaps because of the factors discussed in paragraphs 7 and 8 above, the fertility rate amongst younger women has fallen and the evidence suggests that the increasing rate of fertility amongst older women does not compensate for the downward trend observed amongst younger women (Clarke & Henwood, 1997).
17. While the factors of choice discussed above are seen as important in reducing the fertility rate, the increased availability and effectiveness of contraception and the relatively recent changes in legislation on abortion have been proposed as the main

reasons for the observed decrease in fertility rates. Scott (1999) suggests that contraception, the conditional right to abortion and the marked increase in the acceptance of abortion and contraception amongst women during the 30-year period in question, have radically changed the position of women giving them greater freedom and control over marriage and family size. All of these 'medical' factors, and the social choice factors, may create many compounding situations where no single factor is a more important explanatory variable than any other.

### ***Marriage/Divorce and Household Change***

18. Chafetz (1995) has argued that it is too simplistic to attribute the changes observed in household trends to the consequences of the feminist movement, given that many of the observed changes pre-date World War II. However, the increasing independence and choice for women in their education and career has had at least a partial effect on the changes observed in households, driven by the rise in the number of divorces, the decrease in the number of marriages, the increase in the age of first marriage and increased age of first birth.
19. The decrease in marriage and rise in divorce in Scotland over the last 30 years will also have contributed to the changing composition of Scotland's households. However, there is a continuing debate about whether the advent of equal rights for men and women has resulted in the changes witnessed in the numbers of marriages and divorces over the last 30 years and thus household size and structure in Scotland (Scott, 1999).

### ***General Overview***

20. Society, and the composition of its households, has changed considerably from the "traditional family" household that was the norm in the 50s and 60s. A comparison of Scotland's household composition with that of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland may cast light on these changes.
21. The 1971 Census in Scotland (GROS, 1971) made no distinction between married couples and co-habiting couples. Instead, households were classed in terms of the number of families and people, where a family was defined as:  
  
"a married couple with or without their never-married children"  
"a mother or father together with his or her never-married children",
22. Using this definition, in conjunction with the "1971 Census - Household Composition Tables" (GROS, 1975) and the "2001 - Scottish Social Statistics" (Scottish Executive, 2001), the following changes took place:

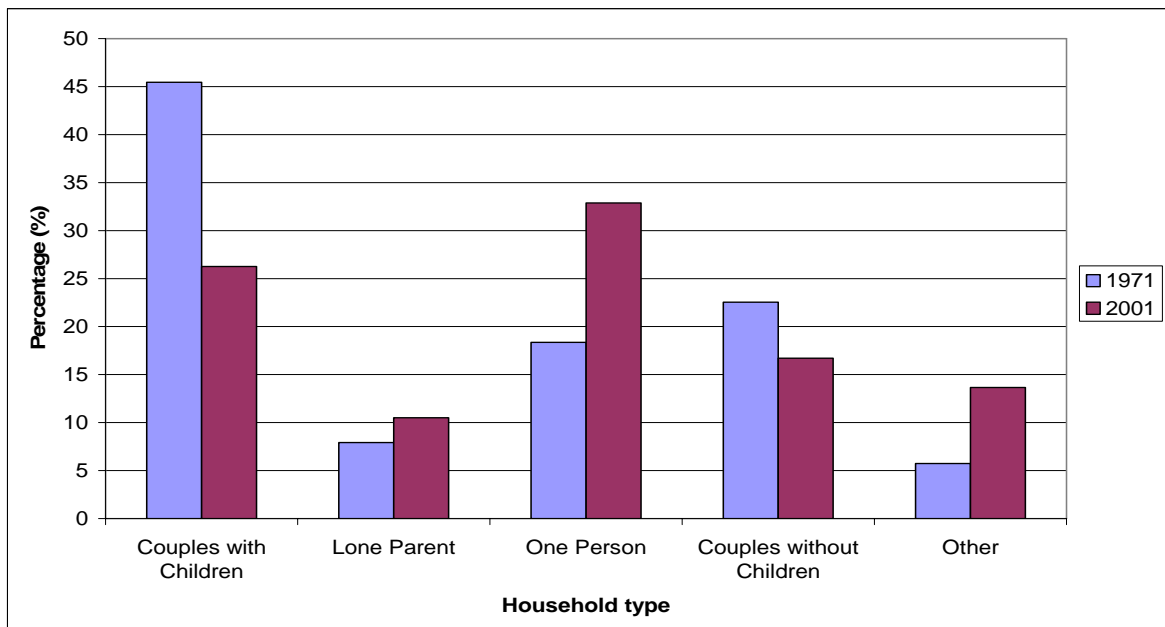
#### **Changes in household structure, Scotland (1971-2001)**

- The percentage of all households with at least 1 pensioner rose from 12% in 1971 to 15% in 2001.
- The percentage of all married/cohabiting couple with children households fell from 45% to 26%.

- The percentage of all lone-parent family households rose from 8% to 10½%.
- The percentage of all one-person households rose from 18% in 1971 to 33% in 2001.
- The percentage of married/cohabiting couples without children has fallen slightly while there was an increase in the percentage of households classed as “other” over the 30-year period.

23. Chart 2 below illustrates these changes. It is evident from this chart that, whilst the prevalence of couple households has decreased, all other household types have increased as a proportion of total households, most particularly one-person households. The subsequent subsections discuss these changes and explore whether Scotland is unique in the UK and Ireland or whether these trends are part of some wider change in household composition.

**Figure 2 Changes in Scottish Household Composition - 1971-2001 (GROS)<sup>2</sup>.**



### 3 SCOTLAND’S PLACE IN THE UK AND IRELAND

#### 3.1 Introduction

24. This section provides a more detailed analysis of how the changes in Scotland’s households compare to the rest of the UK and Ireland for the 20 year period 1981-2001. The household types examined were:

- One-person households;

<sup>2</sup> “Other” Households includes: Multi-pensioner, Multi-student, Other with one or more dependents, All other households

- Married/cohabitant couple households with children;
- Lone parent households;
- Married/cohabitant couple households without children;
- Other households;

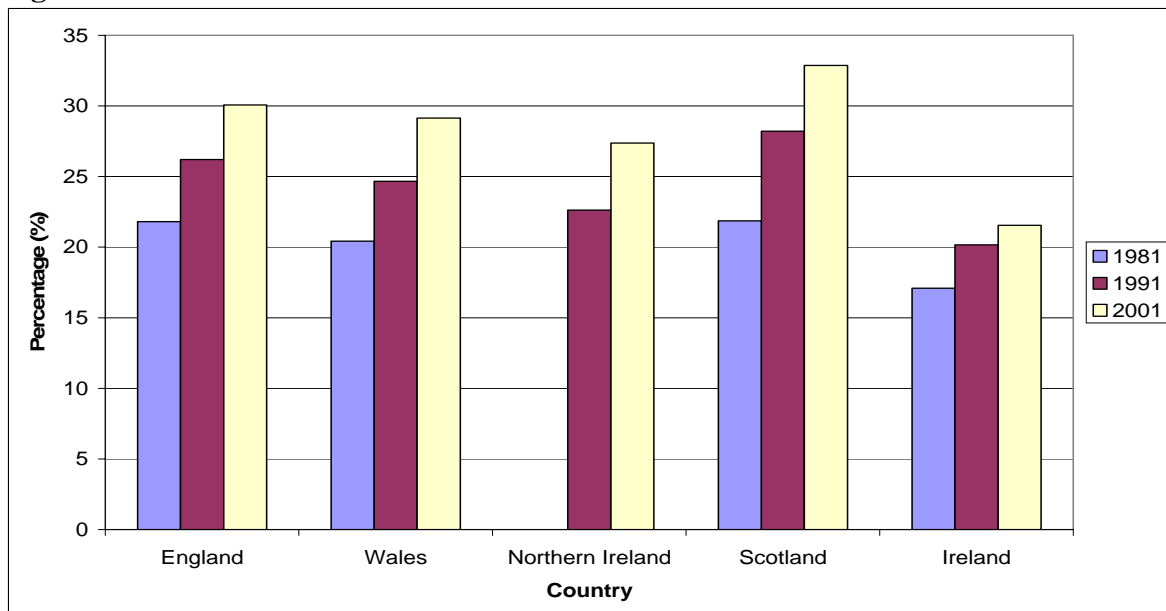
### 3.2 One Person Households

#### One Person Households (1981-2001)

- The proportion of households in Scotland which are single person households rose from 22% to 33% from 1981-2001.
- Over the same period Ireland experienced an increase from 17% to 22%.
- The number of divorces in Scotland in 2001 (see Figure 4) was slightly higher than in 1981, but almost 3 times higher than in 1952.
- The most marked increase in one-person households between 1981 and 2001 was observed amongst men aged 35-44 (up from 9% to 20%) and women aged 25-34 (up from 3% to 10%).
- The most marked decrease in one-person households was observed amongst those who were above pensionable age but below the age of 74 (down from 41% to 25% for men and from 79% to 61% for women).

25. One of the two most significant changes in household composition across the UK and in Ireland over the last 20 years has been the rapid expansion of one-person households (Figure 3).

**Figure 3 One Person Households – UK and Ireland<sup>3</sup>**



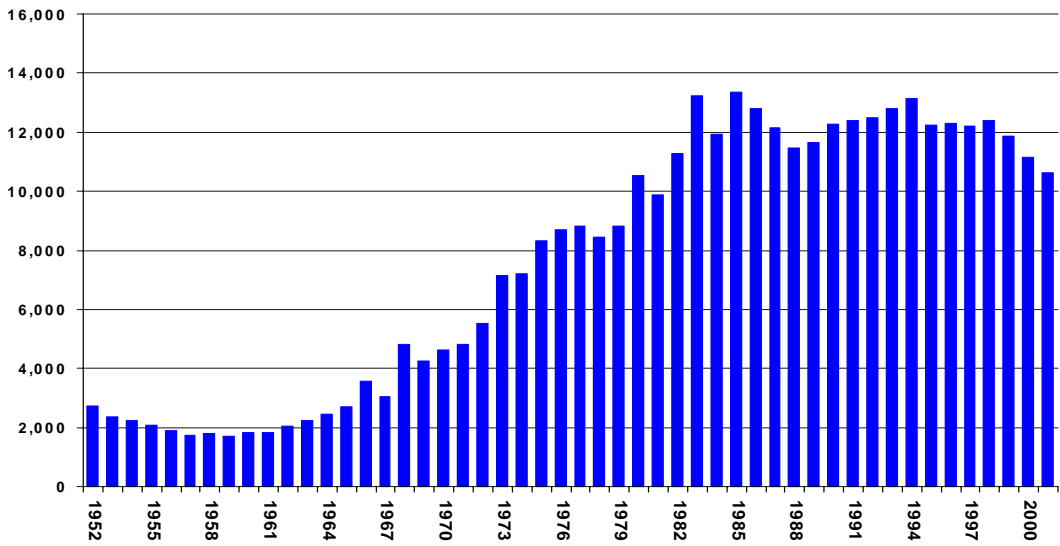
<sup>3</sup> Note: 1981 Northern Ireland household composition data was inconsistent with the rest of the UK and Ireland and so is not included in this and the following graphs. The data for these graphs came from Census tables published by each country.

- 26. The chart shows that all parts of the UK and Ireland witnessed an increase in one-person households as a proportion of all households. In Scotland, this increase was above average, and in Ireland it was below average. To understand this trend, the composition of one-person households in Scotland was further examined using Scottish Census records. The main results of this analysis in conjunction with proposed explanations of these differences are given in later sections of this paper.
- 27. The number of people of retirement age and above is increasing. As a result, so has the number of one-person households for this age group. However, there has been a drop in the proportion of one-person households for this age group - so increased longevity only partially explains the increased number of one-person households.

***One Person Households by Age and Sex***

- 28. One suggested reason for the observed increase in one-person households is the increased divorce rate - from 2 in every 17 marriages in 1971 to 1 in every 2 marriages in 2001 (Scottish Executive, 2001). The number of divorces in Scotland in 2001 was more than 3 times the number in 1952 (Figure 4).
- 29. It has been proposed (McFalls Jr, 2003) that this trend, in conjunction with the high proportion of children who go to live with their divorced mother (90% of all one parent households have a female household head), has resulted in many men leaving the family home and setting up on their own. Whilst it is difficult to determine whether this is the case, the household composition by age tables in the Scottish Census results for 1981 and 2001 were compared to examine which age group for each sex had primarily caused the observed increase in one-person households. The results of this investigation can be seen in Figure 5.

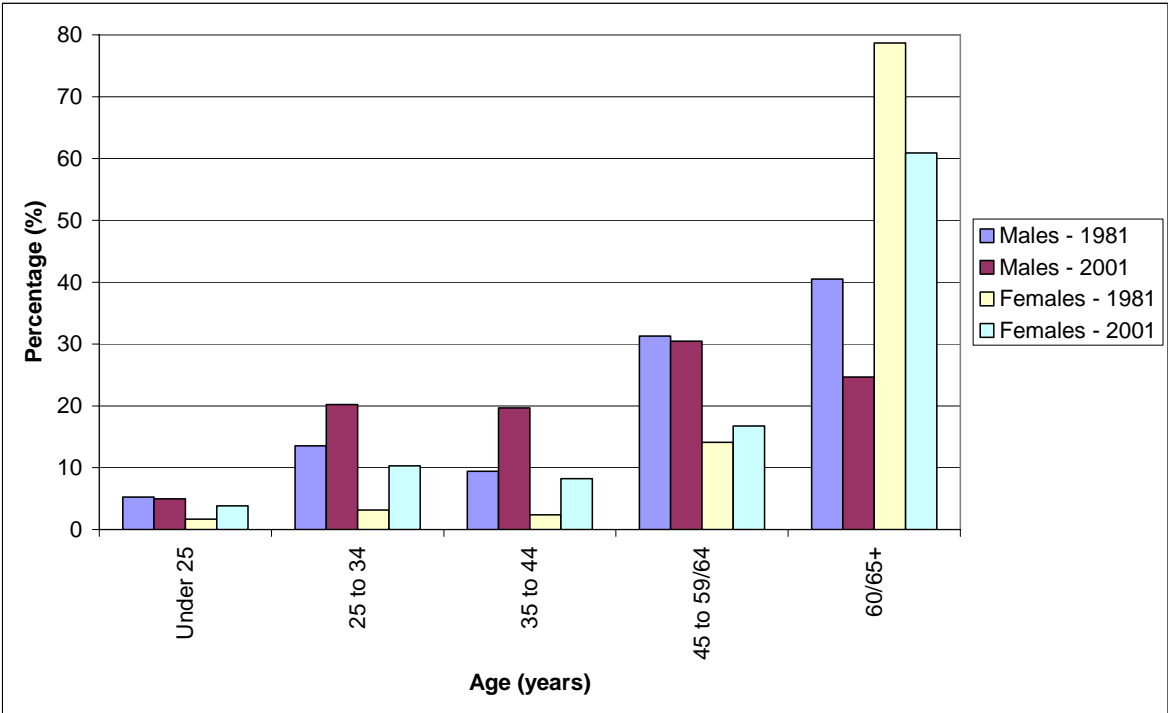
**Figure 4      Number of Divorces in Scotland (1952-2001)<sup>4</sup>**



<sup>4</sup> Source: Scotland’s Population 2002: The Registrar General’s Annual Review of Demographic Trends, (GROS 2003)

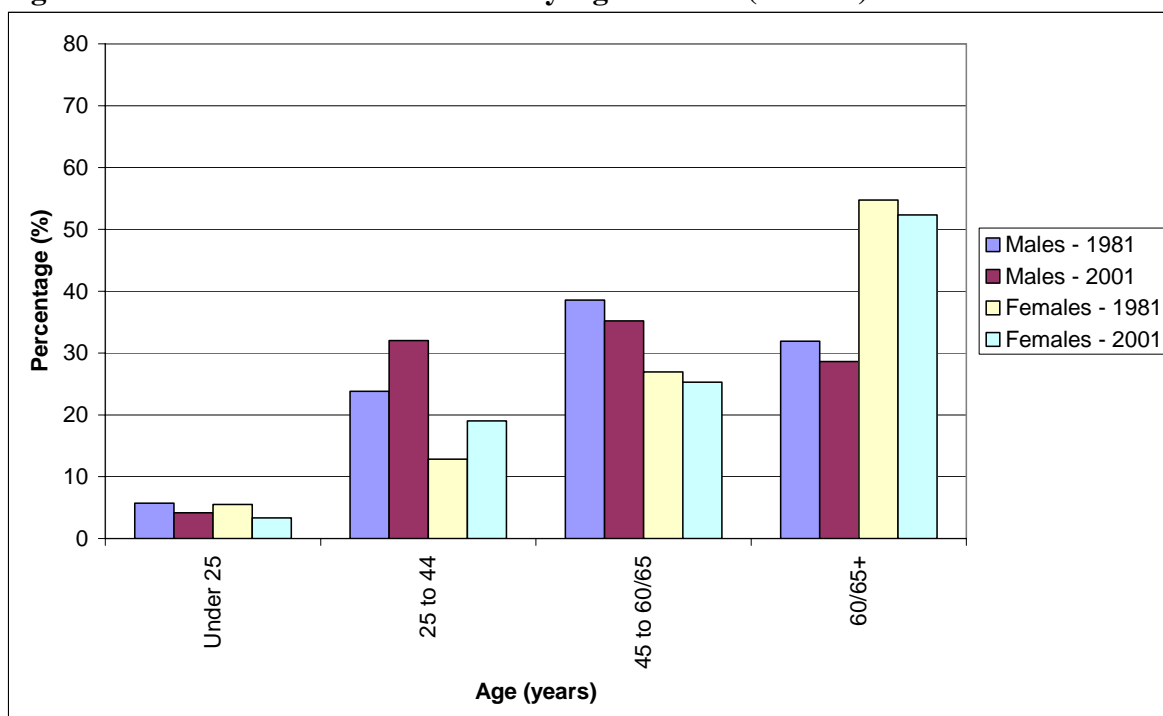


**Figure 5 One Person Households by Age and Sex (Scotland)**



30. The number of one person households almost doubled between 1981 and 2001, from 393,000 to 721,000, with numbers increasing in every age group. Figure 5 shows the proportion of one person household by age group for both males and females in both these years. The greatest increase in the proportion of one-person households was found amongst women aged 25-34 and men aged 35-44. Explanations for the increase amongst women aged 25-34 include more young women opting for a career prior to settling down and having children whilst the increase in men aged 35-44 may be due to divorce.
31. Figure 6 shows the percentage of one-person households by age group in Ireland over time. Though there was a smaller rise in one-person households in Ireland than Scotland, the trends by age group are similar to those in Scotland - for example, the fall in the percentage of one-person households occupied by a young male. However, the increase in one-person households, especially those occupied by women aged 45 to pensionable age has not been observed in Ireland. This difference might be because divorce was not legal in Ireland until the introduction of the Divorce Ireland Act in 1996, or because people in Ireland largely hold more traditional views on marriage, abortion, contraception and divorce. Whatever the reason, the average household size in Ireland is approximately 3 and it remains among the highest in Europe.

**Figure 6 One Person Households by Age and Sex (Ireland)**



### *Overview of One Person households*

32. Clarke and Henwood (1997) suggest that the dramatic increase in the prevalence of single person households - one of the most significant changes in Scotland's household composition - is a result of policy changes on a variety of issues over the last 30 years. However, the commonly expressed view that this is caused by the young having greater freedom, economic resources and less commitment, so allowing them to set up on their own, may be a fallacy. Some interpretations of the evidence suggest the exact opposite: young people are remaining in the parental home longer due to their inability to afford to set up on their own in conjunction with their desire to "have a life" before marriage and family (Lewis 2001; Scott 1999).

### **3.3 Married/Cohabiting Couples with Children**

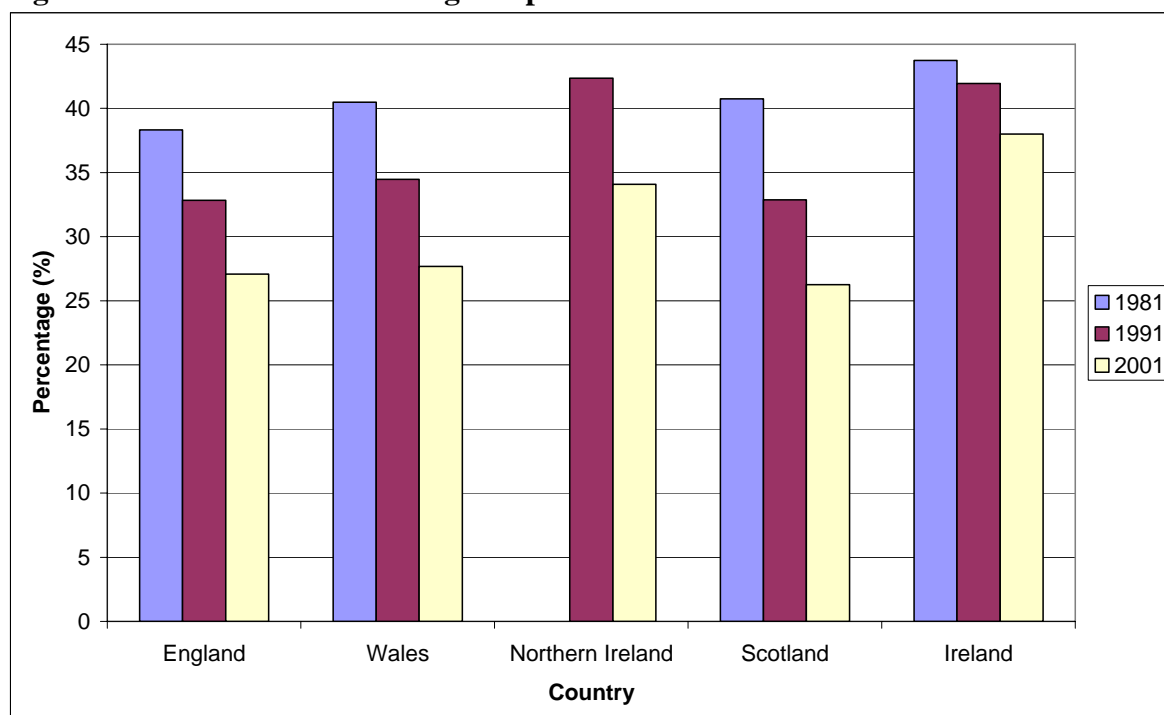
#### **Married/Cohabiting Couples with Children (1981-2001)**

- Within Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland, Scotland had the largest decrease since 1981 in the proportion of all households which consisted of married/cohabiting couples with children (down from 41% of all households in 1981 to 26% in 2001).
- Ireland has witnessed the smallest decrease in this proportion over the same period, falling from 44% to 38%.
- At GB level, the same proportion fell by 12 percentage points, from 39% in 1981 to 27% in 2001.

33. One of the most marked changes in household composition in Scotland from 1981 to 2001 has been the reduction in the number of married and cohabiting couples with children (including non-dependent children), sometimes referred to as the "traditional

family'. In 1981, these households were about 41% of all households, but by 2001 only 26%. A similar picture was also found in England and Wales (Figure 7).

**Figure 7 Married/Cohabiting Couples with Children - UK and Ireland**



34. All countries in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland have witnessed a fall in the prevalence of married/cohabiting couple households with children since 1981. In the ten years since 1991, Northern Ireland has seen the most change and the Republic of Ireland the least change. There are several reasons suggested for this observed change in all countries.

***Suggested reasons for decline in married/cohabiting couple households with children***

35. The first factor, highlighted by Coleman and Salt (1992), is not the decline in the numbers of married and cohabiting couples with children, but the increase in the number of single person households. They argue that, although the proportion of total households consisting of the “traditional” family has decreased significantly, there has been little change in the proportion of the total population who live in these households. However, the Scotland Census records for the period 1981-2001 show that the estimated proportion of people living in such households fell from approximately 60% in 1981 to approximately 44% in 2001.
36. Coleman and Salt also highlight the increase in the age at which people get married. They suggest that an increase in the number of people living together before marriage or childbearing has resulted in an increase in the proportion of all households consisting of a married/cohabiting couple household without children at the expense of the married/cohabiting couple household with children. However, an examination of the trends in married/cohabiting couples without children shows a sharp decline in this household type over the last 20 years in Great Britain, while the proportion of

such households in Ireland has actually increased over the same period. This trend is discussed in greater detail in section 3.5.

37. A more tenable reason for this trend is highlighted by Clarke & Henwood (1997), Coleman & Salt (1992) and Lewis (2001): that many couples, in Scotland and in the rest of the UK, are choosing to forego marriage and children altogether. Even in Ireland, where the proportion of married/cohabiting couple households with children is still relatively high, there has been a sharp decline in the last ten years in the proportion of women under 30 who have married (Kennedy & McCormack, 1997), indicating that women are postponing marriage and childbearing. It is however, too early to tell whether these women will remain unmarried and childless. A sharp decline in fertility has been observed recently (Fahey, 2001; O'Donoghue & O'Shea, 2002).

### *Overview of married/cohabiting couple households with children*

38. Perhaps the most surprising inference that could be drawn is that this type of household may be only an intermediate stage in the evolution of the modern family (Clarke & Henwood 1997). It was so prevalent in the 50s that it is the base line against which many social scientists measure changes in family and household structure. It may, however, be relatively recent in its origin, having been born out of the unusual social circumstances during the two World Wars and in particular World War II (Chafetz, 1995). This, together with the fact that cohabitation and single parenthood were common in the early part of the 20th century when divorce was rare (Chafetz, 1995), throws into doubt the theory that the family, consisting of a married couple with children, is the norm in society.

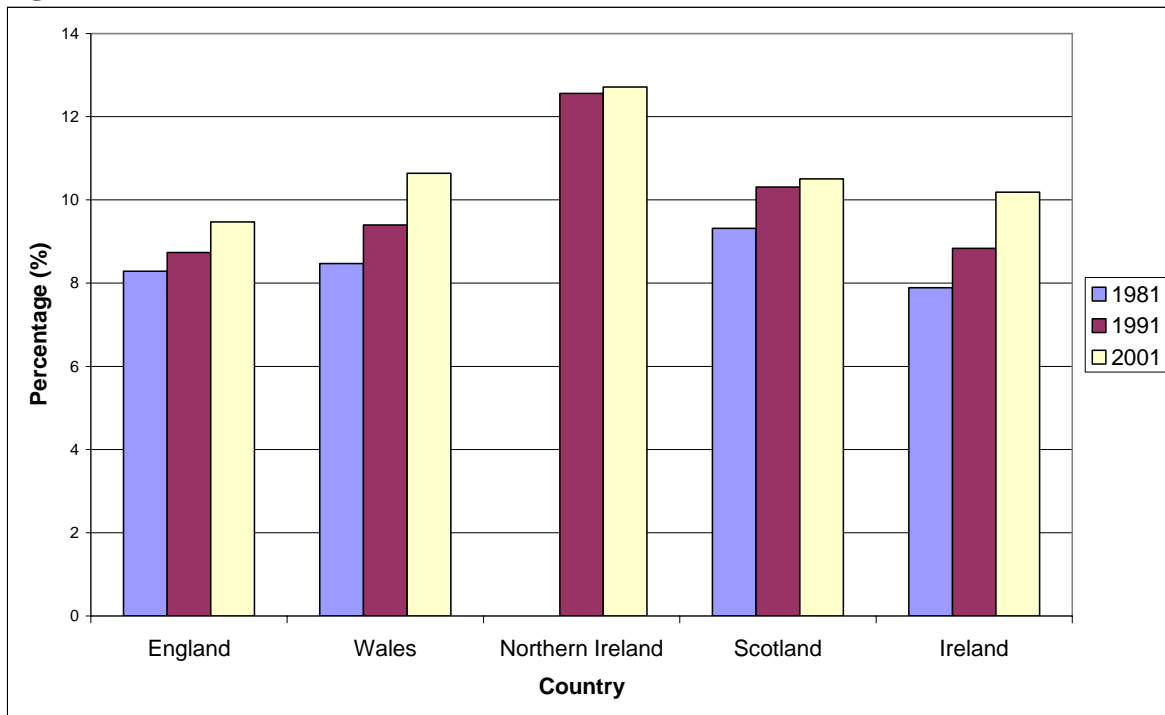
## **3.4 Lone Parent Households**

### **Lone Parent Households**

- Scotland experienced an increase in the proportion of lone parent households from 9.3% of all households in 1981 to 10.5% in 2001.
- In the same period, England experienced an increase of similar magnitude to Scotland while slightly higher increases in the proportion of lone parent families were observed in Wales and the Republic of Ireland.
- Northern Ireland remained constant over the 10-year period from 1991 to 2001.

39. Scotland, England, Wales and the Republic of Ireland all experienced relatively similar rates of change in the proportion of lone parent households over the period 1981 to 2001 (Figure 8). Northern Ireland experienced very little change between 1991 and 2001. The graph also shows that, in both 1991 and 2001, Northern Ireland had the highest rate of lone parent families out of the 5 countries examined.

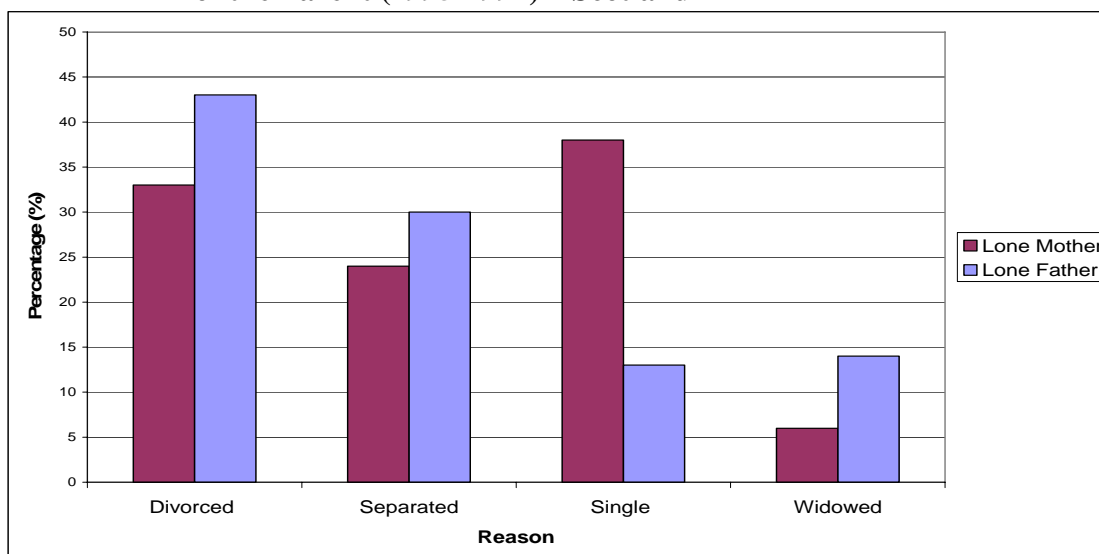
**Figure 8 Lone Parent Households - UK and Ireland**



***Suggested reasons for increase in lone parent households***

40. The causes of lone-parent households are numerous – for example, the death of one parent, divorce and illegitimacy are all possible contributory reasons. Scotland has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Europe and the highest rate of unmarried mothers giving birth (Scottish Executive, 2003). Another possible factor in the increase in lone-parent families is the Divorce (Scotland) Act 1976 (and similar legislation elsewhere). It makes the irretrievable breakdown of marriage, established by proving one of five specified facts, all that is required to obtain a divorce (Scottish Executive, 2003).
41. The percentage of male and female lone-parent households in Scotland by the marital status of the parent for the period 1995-1997 is shown in Figure 9. More lone male-parent households in Scotland are a result of divorce than any other factor. The least likely reason for males is being a single (never married) parent. Conversely, the most common reason for lone female-parent households is that of single parent with the least common reason being the death of one parent (One Parent Families Scotland, 2003).

**Figure 9 Lone Parent Households by Marital Status of the Parent (1995-1997) – Scotland<sup>5</sup>**



**General Overview**

42. In the past, death rates were higher and life expectancy was lower. As a result, lone parent households often arose through widowhood rather than divorce (Clarke & Henwood, 1997; Kennedy & McCormack, 1997). The most significant change in lone parent households now is in the circumstances that create them.

**3.5 Married/Cohabitant Couple Households without Children**

**Married/Cohabitant Couple Households without Children (1981-2001)**

- In all the countries of Great Britain, there was a rise between 1981 and 1991 in the percentage of all households which come into this category followed by a sharp fall between 1991 and 2001.
- The fall between 1991 and 2001 was greater in England and Wales than in Scotland..
- In Ireland there has been an increase from 11% of all households in 1981 to 16% in 2001.

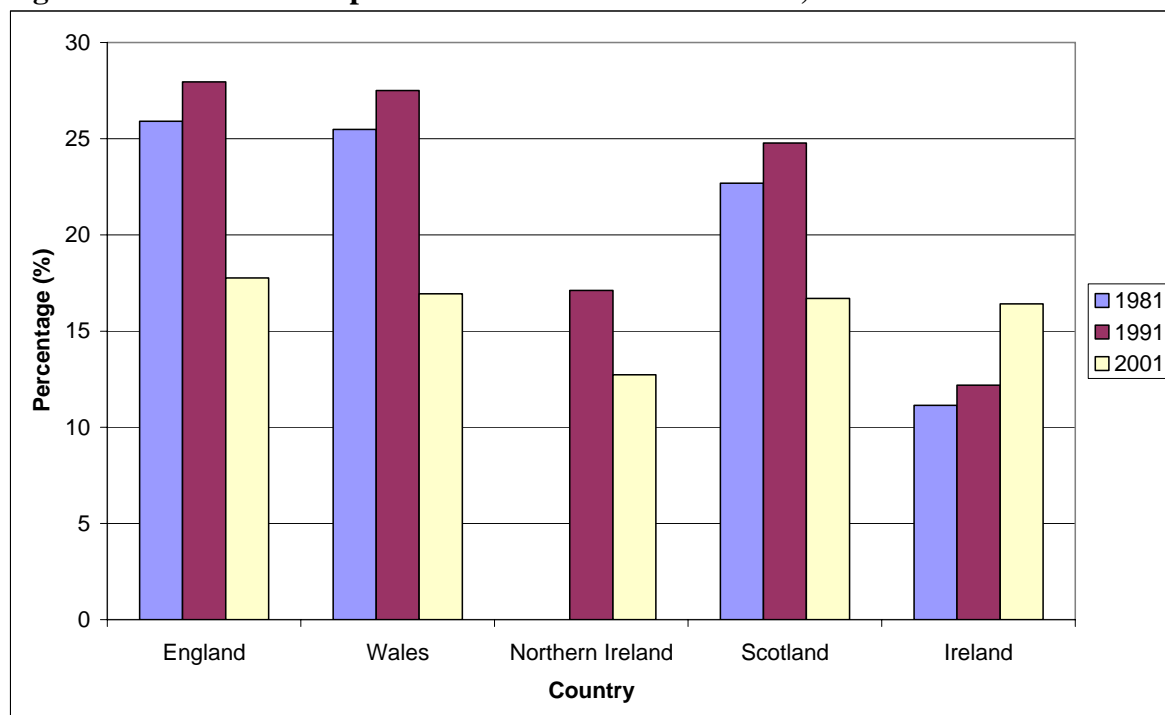
43. In Scotland, couple households with no children, as a proportion of all households, rose from 23% in 1981 to 25% in 1991, before falling to 17% in 2001. The proportion also fell significantly in England, Wales and Northern Ireland over the last 10 years (Figure 10), but rose in Ireland. Although Ireland experienced an increase in the proportion of adult-only couple households, it still had a smaller proportion of its total households in this category in 2001 than the countries of Great Britain.

<sup>5</sup> Source: *One Parent Families Scotland, General Statistics (2003)*

***Suggested reasons for the observed trends in married/cohabiting couple households without children***

44. The trends witnessed in married/cohabiting couples without children can be attributed to the reduction in the total fertility rate observed during the period 1981-2001 as illustrated in Table 1.

**Figure 10 Couple Households without Children, UK and Ireland**



**Table 1 Total Fertility Rates 1981-2001<sup>6</sup>**

Country	1981 TFR	2001 TFR	Difference in TFR	Rank
England	1.79	1.64	- 0.15	5
Rep of Ireland	3.07	1.98	- 1.09	1
Northern Ireland	2.59	1.80	- 0.79	2
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>1.49</b>	<b>- 0.35</b>	<b>3</b>
Wales	1.86	1.66	- 0.20	4

45. Scotland has the lowest TFR in the UK, though Northern Ireland has seen the largest fall between 1981 and 2001. This could be a factor in the trends seen in Figure 10. The factors behind the increased proportion of this household type in Ireland have again been attributed to the decreasing fertility rate associated with postponement of child bearing and lack of childbearing and the legalisation and increased availability of contraception (Kennedy & McCormack, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Source: ONS (2004) & Council of Europe (2001). The Total Fertility Rate is the mean number of children that would be born alive to a woman during her lifetime if she were to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the **fertility rates by age** of a given year.

**3.6 Other Households**

**Other Households (1981-2001)**

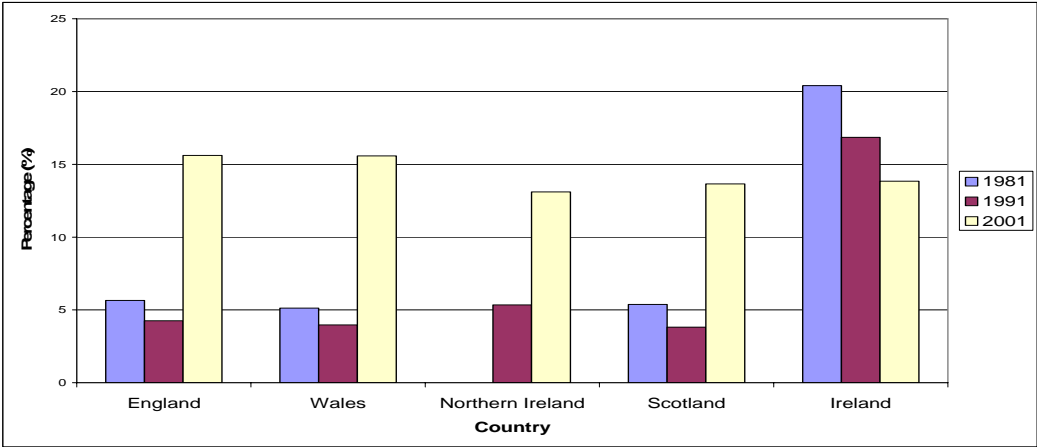
- In Scotland, the proportion of all households represented by this type more than doubled over the period, from 5% of the total in 1981 to 14% in 2001.
- Multi-pensioner households account for approximately 9% of all “Other” households.
- Student households account for 10% of all “Other” households.
- “Other” households with dependents account for 32% of all “Other” households.

46. “Other” households (which for the purposes of this paper are defined as all households not covered previously) accounted for approximately 5% of all households in Scotland in 1981. By 2001 this figure had more than doubled to nearly 14%. The main factors contributing to this increase are thought to be the rise in the number of multi-pensioner households and the rise in the number of multi-student households. With the constantly ageing population, it was found in the 2001 Census that multi-pensioner households accounted for 9% of “Other” households and multi-student households 10%.

47. However, another important family group which, as a result of divorce, is rapidly on the increase is the mixed family household. This household type, often ungraciously classified as a "reconstituted" family, is one of the most difficult family groups to measure due to the different ways in which families of this type classify themselves. The parents in many of these families are not married and, as a result of this and the negative imagery associated with step-parents, do not classify the children as step-children but either as their own children or unrelated (Panneton, 1992).

48. Of the 300,000 or so “Other” households in Scotland, nearly 32% were classed as “Other - with 1 or more dependent”. This makes measuring the prevalence of this household type in our society problematic, and current estimates now understate the true figure. The matrix question in the 2001 Census appears to have given much more information and may provide a more accurate assessment of the prevalence of “reconstituted” households. Figure 11 shows estimates of this family type over the last 20 years.

**Figure 11 “Other” Households, UK and Ireland**





49. This graph shows that the experience of the Republic of Ireland is again very different to all countries within the UK, with the proportion of households in this category falling sharply. It is not clear why Ireland has seen such a different trend in this household type. However, given that Ireland did not use the relationship matrix question in their Census, it is possible that the difference in trends observed in Figure 11 between the Irish data and the UK is due to the data not being comparable.
50. Clearly one can question the trend in Figure 11 and interpret it as an artefact of the relationship matrix, replacing a question which asked only for the relationship to the head of household.

### 3.7 Scotland's Place in Europe

#### Scotland's place in Europe

- Scotland's total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.49 is just above the European average of 1.47.
- Scotland will soon be below average in the "European Geriatric League Table" (Coleman 2003).
- Scotland is experiencing similar trends to the rest of Europe in terms of demographic and household changes.

51. Until the 1960's, great similarity in family and household trends between the different industrialised European countries was observed. However, since then the similarity between these countries seems to be disappearing (Rothenbacher, 1995). Instead, three distinct groupings of countries with similar household formation trends have emerged (Eurostat, 1999):

- Nordic                                      Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Netherlands
- North/Central                              UK, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Germany and Austria
- Southern/Catholic                              Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece

52. In these groupings, the constituent parts of the UK are pigeon-holed together. However, as noted above, the characteristics of Scotland's household composition are different from the rest of the UK in many respects. Therefore Scotland's place in Europe was investigated further to find out if it is correctly classified as North/Central or whether Scotland is aligned more with the Nordic countries.

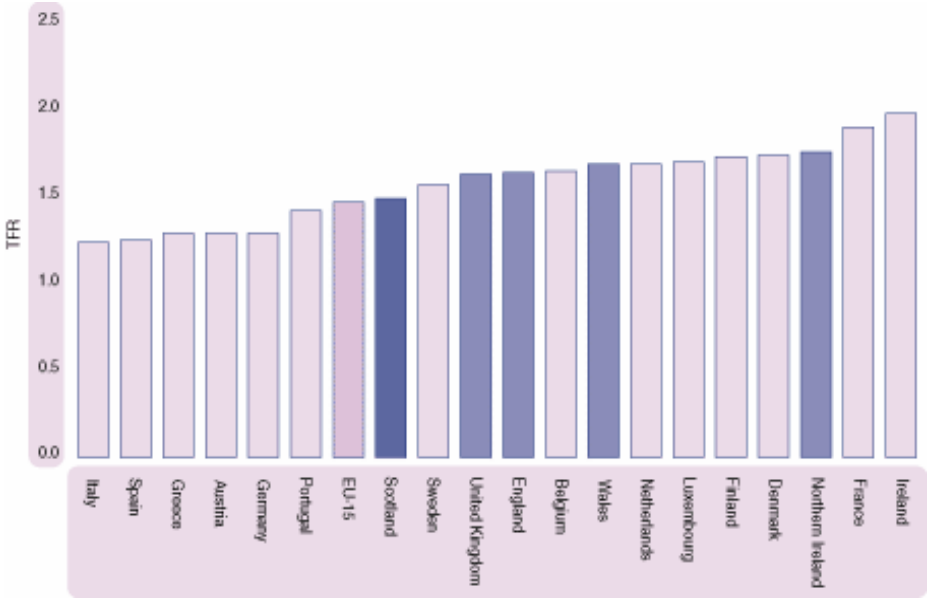
53. It was hoped that general trends and data on the 5 household classification groups for Scotland analysed previously could be compared with those for the Nordic, North/Central and South/Catholic groups. However, when data from the Eurostat Yearbook and the United Nations Statistics Division were combined it was found that the data trends made no sense. Subsequent research found that this is a fairly common problem when trying to compare household data across the different European countries with the data often being "deficient and incomplete" (Coleman, 2003). Therefore a literature review of existing work about the general household trends across the various European countries was carried out.

54. Very similar trends to those previously discussed about Scotland have been witnessed across Europe over the last 30 years:-

- Reducing household size;
- Increase in the family types;
- Increasing single person households;
- Increase in the rate of lone parent households;
- Increasing rate of childlessness (i.e. increasing number of couple only households);
- Increasing number of households;
- Decreasing number of married couple households with children;
- Increasing rate of divorce.

55. However, according to Rothenbacher (1995), the rate and reasons for these observed trends vary from country to country with Scotland often at the forefront. For example, Scotland has one of the highest divorce rates, highest rate of single person households and highest rate of teenage motherhood in Europe - approximately 4 times the Western European average despite a decline in fertility rates across Europe (Coleman, 2003) over the last 20-30 years. The total fertility rate across selected European countries is shown in Figure 12 (GROS 2003).

**Figure 12 Total Fertility Rates for Selected European Countries<sup>7</sup>**



56. The total fertility rate for Scotland (1.48) is just above the EU average of 1.47. The countries in the Southern/Catholic group (with the exception of Ireland which has the highest total fertility rate in Europe at 1.98) have the lowest rates of total fertility in

<sup>7</sup> Source: Scotland’s Population 2002: The Registrar General’s Annual Review of Demographic Trends, (GROS 2003)

Europe at 1.24 and 1.25 - in Italy and Spain respectively. The Nordic countries can be found to have some of the highest rates, from approximately 1.5 in Sweden to approximately 1.65 in Denmark.

57. The decrease in fertility across Europe is attributed in part to the increasing age at which women are having children. This is evident by the increasing number of childless couple families and smaller family sizes in many European countries, especially the Nordic group (Pearce, Cantisani & Laihonon, 1999).
58. Of course, the decrease in fertility has contributed, along with people living longer, to the ageing of the population evident across Europe, including Scotland as discussed in section 2. However, Scotland and the rest of the UK are no longer at the forefront of the ageing trend, with many European countries having caught up with Scotland's levels over the last 5 to 10 years.
59. It is estimated that soon Scotland will be below average in the "European geriatric league table" (Coleman, 2003). This is not to say that Scotland's population is no longer ageing. Rather, similar problems associated with ageing and longevity (e.g. increasing pensions and health service burdens) are projected in many other European countries. Although Scotland's household trends are often at one extreme of the European range they are in no way unique and are in fact part of a Europe-wide trend dubbed the "Second Demographic Transition" (Kuijsten & Strohmeir, 1997).
60. Without the establishment of a consistent European dataset on household change, it is difficult to establish Scotland's place in Europe. It is hoped that the establishment of the European Community Household Panel (Eurostat, 2003) and the work carried out by researchers such as Coleman (2003) in establishing a consistent Europe wide dataset will soon allow Scotland's position to be established.

### **3.8 Summary**

61. Scotland and Ireland differ from England, Wales and Northern Ireland in many aspects of household composition. However, there is a Europe-wide problem of identifying the make up of today's society. With pluralisation of households and the increasing complexity and diversity of the "family unit", the traditional Census was until 2001 failing to capture a true picture of society because many family types remained hidden. This in itself may account for the dramatic changes from one Census to the next. However, the introduction of the "Relationship Matrix" question in the 2001 Census makes it seem that these changes were an artefact of the Census which has now adjusted to the changes in society and will in future provide an accurate picture of changes in household composition.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

62. The aim of this paper was to establish if Scotland's household composition is different from the rest of the UK and Europe. In many previous research projects to determine where the UK lies in relation to the rest of Europe, Scotland and Northern Ireland have either not been included - with only the data from England and Wales - or have been included in UK figures dominated by data from England and Wales. Yet a comparison of Scotland's Census data to similar data obtained from the other UK Censuses suggests that, although the general household trends found in Scotland are similar to the rest of the UK and Europe, there are some crucial differences.
63. Scotland has seen an above average rise of 11 percentage points in single person households as a proportion of all households over the period 1981-2001, compared to increases of 8 and 9 percentage points for England and Wales, respectively. As a result, Scotland has the highest proportion of single person households in the UK and Europe. It may be that divorce and separation of cohabiting couples is a major cause. Scottish Census household composition tables indicate that, the above-average increase in single person households is a result of a large increase in the proportion of single person households which consist of a person of retirement age or older living alone.
64. Scotland has shown a sharp decrease in the total fertility rate from approximately 1.75 in 1981 to 1.47 in 2001. However, this is close to the European average of 1.46.
65. The most severe reduction is in the proportion of married couple families in Scotland, which halved between 1981 and 2001 – a much greater decrease than in the rest of the UK or Ireland.
66. The proportion of lone-parent families in Scotland increased between 1981 and 1991 before increasing only slightly over the period 1991-2001. Northern Ireland had by far the highest proportion of lone-parent households in the UK in both 1991 and 2001.
67. All UK countries have shown a sharp decline between 1991 and 2001 in the proportion of all households represented by adult couple only households.
68. This research has gone some way to establish where Scotland lies in relation to the rest of the UK. However, great difficulties were found when trying to determine Scotland's place in Europe. There are few comparable data sources available on household composition trends in the various European countries over the last 20 years. Initiatives such as the European Community Household Panel have been taken over the last few years to address this issue. However, access to this data is very limited and, until detailed and comparable data about the various household composition groups of the different European countries can be made widely available, a true comparison between Scotland and the rest of Europe cannot be made.

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