

2 Fill in the gaps (1–10) in the article with words or phrases from the box.

birth rate breadwinners childbirth childcare
divorce rates households nuclear family offspring
registered partnership single-parent families

WHAT IS A 'TYPICAL FAMILY'?

The British find it hard to define. It seems that the conventional model of a(n) ¹ _____ (a married couple with children) is not the only option people choose. Many people simply live together with a partner for a time before moving on to a different relationship. And even those who decide to live with a partner often prefer a(n) ² _____ (also referred to as a civil union) to a legal marriage contract. Also, the number of ³ _____ (mothers or fathers raising kids alone) has tripled in the past 30 years.

Britain also has one of the highest ⁴ _____ in Europe: two in every five marriages will probably fail. But some things are more resistant to change. Household chores (e.g. ironing) are still mainly carried out by women, while men are the ⁵ _____, earning a higher salary than their female partners. In addition to the discrimination in wages, women are also responsible for providing ⁶ _____.

The average age of first-time mothers in the UK is now 29 – compared to 26 in the 1970s – and women are having fewer ⁷ _____. This in turn has led to a decline in the ⁸ _____, which is now averaging 1.8 children per couple. With rates of ⁹ _____ and marriage down, and divorce and single-person ¹⁰ _____ up, is Britain at risk of becoming a nation of loners?