

The past decade has seen a lively interest in the study of fatherhood. This interest was partly driven by concerns about an erosion of fatherhood in light of the increasing numbers of childless men and fathers with reduced or no contact with their children. These trends are also the basis for claims of a decreasing family involvement of men in the United States. This study is guided by the question whether Britain experiences similar long-term trends of men's family involvement. It examines age-specific shares of fathers living with their children for England and Wales by analyzing the National Statistics Longitudinal Study (LS) and the Labour-Force Survey (LFS). It presents period comparisons for ten-year intervals from 1971 to 2010 as well as cohort comparisons for ten-year birth cohorts from 1930-39 to 1970-79 and will examine variations in the observed patterns between different socio-demographic groups, i.e. by social class, education and ethnicity. All analyses are also carried out for women to see whether declining shares of adults living with their child is particular to men.

Initial analyses show a decreasing family involvement of men (in the limited sense of co-residence) but not to the same degree as in the US in the same period. Other interesting results are the relative homogeneity of men's fatherhood experience in young adult years compared to women, and the considerable level of fatherhood involvement of African Caribbean men. Initial findings from the LFS indicate that the negative trends have continued in the new millennium.