

Lonely UK: Number of middle-aged people living alone rises dramatically as marriage continues to decline

- **Almost 2.5m aged 45-64 have no spouse, partner or children living with them**
- **Amount has grown 50% since the mid 1990s**
- **Number of loners has pushed up demand for housing**

By Steve Doughty

The decline of marriage has left ever-increasing numbers of middle-aged men and women living alone. Almost 2.5million between 45 and 64 have their own home but no spouse, partner or children to live with them.

The army of such loners has grown by more than 50 per cent – 800,000-plus – since the mid-1990s, an official analysis said yesterday.

And the number of men on their own has increased far more than women.

Lonely: The decline in marriage has seen huge increases in the number of people living alone. Around 2.5m people aged 45-64 now live by themselves

The Office for National Statistics report suggests that men who have not committed to long-term relationships or whose marriages have been ended by divorce are finding it harder to win partners once they reach middle age.

One reason could be that middle-aged women with good qualifications and jobs have little interest in forming relationships with lower-earning men.

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The rapid rise in middle-aged loners has stoked demand for homes, pushing up the number of households in the country.

The huge number of men who say they are living alone, however, could be partly accounted for by the benefits system, which penalises couples and pays far greater handouts to women who say they are single parents



Well over a million couples are thought to be 'living apart together' to secure the highest possible tax credits and benefits.

Family researcher Patricia Morgan said of the ONS analysis: 'These are appalling figures and we have to

ask why the Government is ignoring this development.

'This is a fall-out from the spread of casual unions and the effective state discrimination against marriage.'

She added: 'The growth of numbers of people living alone is very expensive indeed, in terms of state benefits, the need for more development and health and social services care, because people who live alone are more likely to need the NHS or social services.'

'People think that it is cheaper if people don't form families. It isn't.

'The Government could start by ending the 25 per cent discount on council tax for people living by themselves. It's crazy. It is fining people who live together.'

The ONS analysis said there are now 26.4million homes in Britain, a rise of 11 per cent on 1996.

There are 7.6million households – 29 per cent of the total – with only one person living in them.

This number has increased by more than a million over the last 16 years.

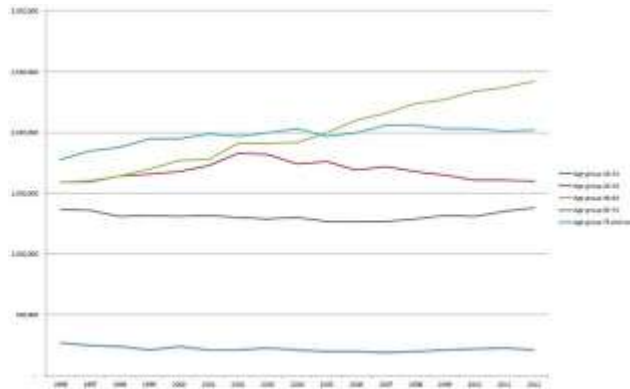
By far the greatest share of the increase is accounted for by the 45-to-64 age group, and the fastest rise in middle-aged people living alone is among men.

According to the ONS report on family life, one reason is the growing numbers of over-45s in the country as the baby boom generation of the 1960s reach middle age.

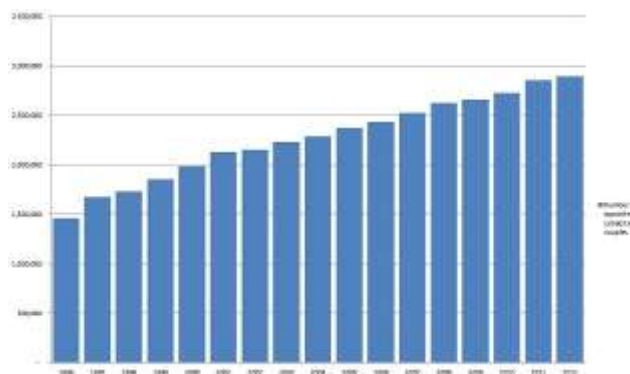
But the report said: 'The increase in those living alone also coincides with a decrease in the percentage of those in this age group who are married – from 79 per cent in 1996 to 69 per cent in 2012 – and a rise in the percentage of those who have never married or are divorced, from 16 per cent in 1996 to 28 per cent in 2012.'

The figures, taken from the large-scale Labour Force Survey, showed that numbers living alone aged between 45 and 64 have gone up by 833,000 since 1996 to 2.42million – a rise of 53 per cent.

Among women the increase has been just under 300,000, to 1.14million, or around 35 per cent.



The number of people who live alone has risen by a million since 1996, according to new figures from the Office for National Statistics



Figures from the ONS show the number of cohabiting couples has almost doubled since 1996

Among men the rise has taken numbers living alone from 744,000 to 1.28million, overtaking the total for women living alone. The increase amounts to 72 per cent.

Harry Benson, of the Marriage Foundation, said: 'People can lose large sums in tax credits and benefits if they say they live together. This has an effect in that people choose not to live together, or say they don't live together. However it may be that the sheer weight of family breakdown is causing an increase in men living alone in their 40s and 50s.'

The ONS figures said that while 2.42million people between 45 and 64 are living alone, there are 1.38million between 65 and 74 and just over 2million over-75s living by themselves. Older people are more likely to be on their own because of the death of a husband or wife.

The ONS reported that there are 135,000 same-sex couples living together in Britain, of which 12,000

have children.

Of 66,000 couples in civil partnerships, 6,000 have children. A further 69,000 same-sex couples live together without having taken out a civil partnership. Again, some 6,000 of these have children.

The figures suggest that take-up might be low if David Cameron opens civil wedding ceremonies to same-sex couples.