

INTRODUCTION

1. This paper examines the characteristics of female respondents who had had at least one miscarriage or abortion by the time they were interviewed at age 23, and explores the relationship between miscarriages and abortions and stillbirths or deaths in the first month of life among children born to these women. In addition, the paper is concerned with the characteristics of cohort members who had become parents, but who were living apart from one or more of their children.
2. By the time they were interviewed, 12 per cent of the female respondents (714) had had a miscarriage or an abortion. Of the 4,619 children born to respondents, three per cent (122) were stillborn or died before interview, and five per cent (233) were living apart from the respondent.
3. The paper addresses the following questions:
 - i) What characteristics are associated with miscarriages and abortions?
 - ii) Is there any relationship between the incidence of miscarriage, abortion, and neonatal death of respondents' children?
 - iii) Is early childbearing associated with miscarriage, abortion, and infant death?
 - iv) Is the incidence of miscarriage, abortion and infant death associated with the experience of family breakdown?
 - v) Do respondents separated from their natural children when interviewed differ from those not in this situation?

4. The paper first describes factors associated with miscarriage and abortion. Factors relating to infant death are then examined. Finally, the paper explores factors associated with the separation of respondents and their natural children.

5. In order to improve the clarity of exposition, tables have been included in the text. All tables are percentaged and percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Values 0.6 to 0.9 are shown as one per cent. Where values are less than 20, the number of individuals is given in bracket. Respondents may have missing data for one or more characteristic; all tables are relevant only to those with complete data.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH MISCARRIAGE AND ABORTION

6. All female respondents (6,176) were asked if they had ever had a miscarriage or an abortion. Despite the sensitivity of this question, only 10 women refused to answer, and 22 said they did not know (presumably, whether they had had a miscarriage).

TABLE 1

Percentage of women who had miscarried or aborted

	%
Miscarriage or abortion	12 (714)
Neither	88 (5430)
Refused to answer	(10)
Didn't know	(22)
N = 100%	6176

7. Of the 714 women who reported that they had miscarried or had an abortion, 52 per cent had miscarried but not had an abortion, 44 per cent had had an abortion but not a miscarriage, and four per cent reported both a miscarriage and an abortion (Table 2).

TABLE 2

Percentage of women who had miscarried only, aborted only, or both.

	%
Miscarriage only	52 (371)
Abortion only	44 (314)
Both	4 (28)
N = 100%	713 (1 refusal)

8. The majority of women who had miscarried only had had one miscarriage (82 per cent) and the majority of women who had had only abortions had had only one (94 per cent).

Social class

9. As table 3 shows, the proportion having had an abortion vary only slightly and inconsistently with social class. Miscarriages on the other hand, are more likely, the lower the woman's social class.

TABLE 3

Ever miscarried or aborted by current social class

	Prof. and intermediate	Other non-manual	Skilled manual	Other manual
	%	%	%	%
Miscarriage only	3	5	6	8
Abortion only	5	4	6	5
Both	(4)	(13)	(3)	(8)
Neither	92	90	88	87
N = 100%	1367	3303	609	1375

Age left school

10. Similarly, the likelihood of having had an abortion is not clearly related to the age at which a woman left school, whereas miscarriages are more likely the younger the school leaving age.

TABLE 4

Ever miscarried or aborted by age left school

	16 or younger %	17 %	18 or older %
Miscarriage only	8	3	2
Abortion only	5	6	4
Both	1	(2)	(2)
Neither	86	91	95
N = 100%	4334	548	1203

Economic activity

11. The majority of women were in paid employment when interviewed, and the majority of women who had had an abortion were in this group (61 per cent). The majority of women who had miscarried, on the other hand, were economically inactive when interviewed (Table 5).

TABLE 5

Ever miscarried or aborted by current economic activity

	Full-time education	Employed	Unemployed	Econ. Inactive	N=100%
	%	%	%	%	%
Miscarriage only	-	37	9	54	371
Abortion only	(9)	61	6	30	314
Both	(1)	(11)	(3)	(13)	28
Neither	2	66	7	23	5416
TOTAL	2	64	7	27	6129

Partnership breakdown

12. Women who had had an abortion were very much more likely (23 per cent) than those who had miscarried (3 per cent) to have reached the age of 23 without having been married or having cohabited (Table 6). Both groups were more than twice as likely to have experienced the breakdown of a partnership as other women in the cohort.

TABLE 6

Ever miscarried or aborted by whether first partnership broke down

	Last partnership broke down %	Last partnership survived %	Never had a partner %	N=100%
Miscarriage only	21	76	3	366
Abortion only	24	53	23	312
Both	(13)	(12)	(2)	27
Neither	10	57	33	5423
TOTAL	11	58	31	6128

Age at birth of first child

13. Table 7 shows that those women who first became mothers when aged 21 or less were more likely to have had a miscarriage or abortion, but there is no further increased likelihood among those having their first child when aged 19 or less.

TABLE 7

Ever miscarried or aborted by age at birth of first child (women who had had at least one child).

	19 or under %	20-21 %	22 or over %
Miscarriage only	14	15	9
Abortion only	6	6	4
Both	(12)	(4)	(2)
Neither	78	78	87
N = 100%	769	659	639

Infant death

14. From table 8, it is clear that women who had miscarried were more likely to have had least one child who was stillborn or who died before the woman was interviewed.

TABLE 8

Ever miscarried or aborted by whether any child stillborn or dead before interview (women who had had at least one child).

	All children survived %	One or more stillborn/died %	N=100%
Miscarriage only	93	7	261
Abortion only	98	2	116
Both	(17)	(2)	19
Neither	97	3	1664
TOTAL	96	4	2060

Family situation

15. The majority of women who had miscarried were married and bringing up children when interviewed, as Table 9 shows. On the other hand, those who had had an abortion were very similar in the distribution of their current family situation to the cohort in general.

TABLE 9
Ever miscarried or aborted by current family situation

	Parents			Non-parents			N=100%
	Lone %	Married %	Cohabiting %	Lone %	Married %	cohabiting %	
Miscarriage only	6	56	6	6	20	5	371
Abortion only	9	24	3	29	24	11	314
Both	(6)	(9)	(2)	(5)	(3)	(3)	28
Neither	4	25	2	36	29	5	5428
TOTAL	4	27	2	34	28	5	6141

Current tenure

16. Table 10 shows that, apart from those still living with their parents, the women least likely to have miscarried or aborted were those who were buying their homes when interviewed. Those most likely to have had a miscarriage were women who were council tenants and private renters were the most likely to have aborted.

TABLE 10

Ever miscarried or aborted by current tenure

	Owner	Council tenants	Private renters	Living with parents	Other
	%	%	%	%	%
Miscarriage only	5	14	6	2	6
Abortion only	4	7	8	5	5
Both	(6)	(12)	(4)	(3)	(2)
Neither	90	78	86	93	88
N = 100%	37	18	11	25	9

Self-reported health

17. The majority of women (8 per cent) reported that their general health was excellent or good, particularly those who had neither miscarried nor had an abortion (Table 11). Overall, women who had had only abortions reported slightly better general health than those who miscarried.

TABLE 11

Ever miscarried or aborted by self-reported general health

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
	%	%	%	%	N=100%
Miscarriage only	29	50	18	3	371
Abortion only	34	48	15	3	314
Both	18	61	14	7	28
Neither	43	47	9	1	5427
TOTAL	41	48	10	1	6140

18. In summary, women who had had abortions differed little from other women in the cohort, except that they were much more likely to have experienced a partnership which had broken down. Women who had miscarried were more likely at the time of interview to be married and bringing up children, to be council tenant, and to be economically inactive.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH INFANT DEATH

19. Eighty-one women (1.3%) had lost a child either through stillbirth or death.
20. Although numbers are small, there is an association between infant death and the experience of partnership breakdown. Women whose first partnership had broken down were more likely than those whose first partnership survived to interview or who had never had a partner to have lost a child (Table 12).

TABLE 12

Ever lost a child through stillbirth or death, by partnership breakdown

Ever lost a child	Ever experienced partnership breakdown	
	Yes %	No %
Yes	2 (17)	1 (62)
No	98	99
N = 100%	696	5555

Age at birth of first child

21. Among those who had had children, the younger the woman when she gave birth to her first child the greater the likelihood of her having had a stillborn child or one who died before interview, as Table 13 shows.

TABLE 13

Ever lost a child by age at first child

	<u>Age at birth of first child</u>		
	19 or less	20-21	22 or over
Ever lost child			
Yes	5	3	3
No	95	97	97
N = 100%	786	665	639

22. Not surprisingly, the women most likely to have lost a child were those who were married and bringing up children when interviewed. Numbers in all other family situation were extremely small.

TABLE 14

Ever lost a child by current family situation

Ever lost a child	Parents			Non-parents		
	Lone	Married	Cohabiting	Lone	Married	Cohabiting
Yes	1 (3)	3	3 (4)	(5)	1 (15)	2 (5)
No	99	97	97	100	99	98
N = 100%	247	1608	124	2102	1731	309

Economic activity

23. Women who had given birth to a stillborn child, or who had lost a child before interview, were much more likely to be economically inactive at 23. This will, of course, largely reflect their marital and family situation, as seen in the previous table.

TABLE 15

Ever lost a child by current economic activity

		Full-time			Econom.	
		educ.	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	N=100%
Ever lost child						
Yes	%	-	20	19	61	80
No	%	2	65	7	26	6174

Current tenure

24. Half of the women who had lost a child were council tenants when interviewed, as Table 16 shows. This is almost three times the proportion of all women who were in this tenure group.

TABLE 16

Ever lost a child by tenure

		Owners	Council tenants	Private renters	Living with parents	Other	N=100%
Ever lost child							
Yes	%	31	50	7 (6)	5 (4)	6 (5)	80
No	%	37	17	11	26	8	6032

Self-reported general health

26. Women who had given birth to a stillborn child or who had lost a child before interview were more likely (24 per cent) to report that their general health was fair or poor than women who had not had this experience (11 per cent) (Table 17).

TABLE 17

Ever lost a child by self-reported general health

		Excellent	Good	fair	Poor	N=100%
Ever lost child						
Yes	%	24	52	19	5	80
No	%	42	48	10	1	6184

Age left school

27. As Table 18 shows, all but four of the women who had lost a child had left school at the age of 16.

TABLE 18

Ever lost a child by age left school

		16 or under	17	18 or over	N=100%
Ever lost child		%	%	%	
Yes		2	(3)	(1)	81
No		71	9	20	6179

Social class

28. Women who had lost a child were more likely than other women to work in semi or unskilled manual occupations. Conversely, such women were much less likely to be found in the highest social class, as Table 19 shows.

TABLE 19

Ever lost a child by current social class

		Prof & inter.	Other non man.	Skilled Manual	Other manual	N=100%
Ever lost child						
Yes	%	5	41	12	42	76
No	%	21	50	9	19	6006

29. In summary, the number concerned was too small to draw any but the most tentative conditions, but it does appear that the women who had lost a child were more likely to have left school early; become a mother whilst still in their teens; experienced the breakdown of their first partnership; be in semi or unskilled manual occupations; be economically inactive when interviewed; be married and bringing up children and living in council accommodation at that time; and to report that their general health was only fair or poor.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CHILDREN LIVING APART

30. At the time of interview 0.8% of women and 2.3% of men reported that they had had a child who was now living apart from them. The remainder of this paper examines the characteristics of those men and women.

Age left school

31. For both sexes, the younger the age at which the respondent left school the greater the likelihood of being separated from a child (Table 20).

TABLE 20

Any children living apart from respondent by respondent's school-leaving age and sex

Children living apart	School-leaving age		
	16 or under %	17 %	18 or older %
WOMEN			
At least one	1	(1)	(2)
None	99	100	100
N=100%	4452	586	1121
MEN			
At least one	3	(9)	(3)
None	97	98	100
N=100%	4439	555	1262

Age at birth of first child

32. Unlike the previous table, Table 21 is based only on respondents who had become parents, and shows that six times as many fathers (12 per cent) as mothers (two per cent) were living apart from their children, and that the younger the age at which respondents became parents the greater the likelihood of this occurring.

TABLE 21

Any child living apart from respondent by age at birth of first child by sex (parents only)

Children living apart	Age at birth of first child			TOTAL
	19 or under	20-21	22 or over	
WOMEN	%	%	%	%
None	94	99	99	98
At least one	6	(3)	(4)	2
N=100%	738	662	645	2090
MEN				
None	77	84	96	88
At least one	23	16	4	12
N=100%	219	387	505	1111

Experience of partnership breakdown

33. Table 22 shows, as would be expected, that respondents whose first partnership had broken down were more likely than those who had not had this experience to be living apart from their children, and that this relationship was particularly marked for men.

TABLE 22
Children living apart from respondent by experience of partnership
breakdown by sex of respondent

Children living apart	Exp. breakdown %	No exp. of breakdown %	TOTAL %
WOMEN			
At least one	3 (23)	1 (27)	1
None	97	99	99
N=100%	699	5552	5251
MEN			
At least one	21	1	2
None	79	99	98
N=100%	413	5844	6257

Social class

34. Among men, those in manual occupations were more likely to have a child no longer living with them (Table 23). There was a similar trend for women, but numbers are small.

TABLE 23

Any children living apart from respondent by current social class by sex of respondent.

Children living apart	Prof. &		Skilled	
	inter.	Other N.M.	Manual	Other manual
	%	%	%	%
WOMEN				
None	99	99	99	98
At least one	1 (9)	1 (16)	1 (4)	2 (20)
N=100%	1283	3035	565	1199
MEN				
None	99	99	97	96
At least one	1 (14)	1 (8)	3	4
N=100%	1278	1018	2408	1224

Economic activities

35. Table 24 shows that, irrespective of the sex of the respondent, those who were unemployed and seeking work were more likely than others to be separated from a child.

TABLE 24

Any children living apart from respondent by current economic activity by sex of respondent

Children living apart	Full-time			Econom.
	Educ.	Employed	Unemployed	inactive
WOMEN	%	%	%	%
None	100	99	98	99
At least one	-	1 (21)	2 (8)	1 (22)
N=100%	104	4029	423	1687
MEN				
None	100	98	95	97
At least one	-	2	5	3
N=100%	199	5185	743	127

Family situation

36. Married respondents were least likely to be separated from a child, as Table 25 shows. For women, lone mothers and cohabitees were most likely to be living apart from a child. For men, those currently cohabiting were most likely to be separated from a child.

TABLE 25

Any children living apart from respondent by current family situation by sex of respondent

Children living apart	Parents			Non-parents		
	Lone %	Married %	Cohabiting %	Lone %	Married %	Cohabiting %
WOMEN						
None	97	99	98	99	99	97
At least one	3 (7)	1 (12)	2 (2)	1 (13)	1 (8)	3 (9)
N = 100%	265	1162	121	2133	1750	344
MEN						
None	(8)	99	91	97	99	95
At least one	-	(4)	9 (8)	3	1 (11)	5 (12)
N=100%	8	944	89	3743	1233	246

Tenure

37. Table 26 shows that, for women, council tenants were most likely to be separated from a child. For men, those who were renting privately or living with parents were most likely to be in this situation.

TABLE 26

Any children living apart from respondent by current tenure by sex of respondent

Children living apart	Owners	Council tenants	Private renters	Living with parents	Other
WOMEN					
	%	%	%	%	%
None	100	97	69	100	99
At least one	(6)	2 (27)	1 (10)	(4)	1 (3)
N = 100%	2241	1083	699	1573	516
MEN					
None	99	98	97	97	97
At least one	1 (13)	2 (11)	3 (15)	3	3 (19)
N = 100%	1345	691	580	2880	564

Self-reported general health.

38. The self reported health of men bore no association with the likelihood of a child living apart from the respondent. Among women there was a slight suggestion that those where health was reported to be fair or poor were more likely than those who said their general health was excellent or good to be separated from a child, but numbers were again extremely small.

TABLE 27

Any children living apart from respondent by respondents self-reported general health by sex of respondent.

Children living apart	General health			
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
WOMEN	%	%	%	%
None	99	99	98	98
At least one	1 (13)	1 (24)	2 (13)	2 (1)
N = 100%	2597	2992	614	61
MEN				
None	98	97	97	98
At least one	2	2 (12)	2 (1)	2
N = 100%	2999	2736	476	51

39. In summary, six times as many fathers as mothers were separated from a child. Irrespective of sex, the younger the school leaving age, and the younger the age at which the respondents became a parent the greater the likelihood of living apart from a child; in addition, unemployed respondents and those who had experience the breakdown of a partnership, and those currently cohabiting were most likely to be separated from a child. For women, lone mothers and council tenants were most likely to be living apart from a child, whereas for men those in the manual social class group and those who were in private-rental accommodation or living with their parent were most likely to be in this situation. Because of the disparity in numbers, the conclusions concerning men living apart from a child are more firmly based than those for women.