



# Social polarisation in reproduction

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## Myth of the Monstrous Women

In 1970 cohort 40% were childless at 35 not 45. Eventual figure may be around 30%.

Slight reassurance, but childbearing among women with tertiary education growing later compared with graduates in previous cohort and non-graduates born in 1970.

Age at which half cohort had become mothers:

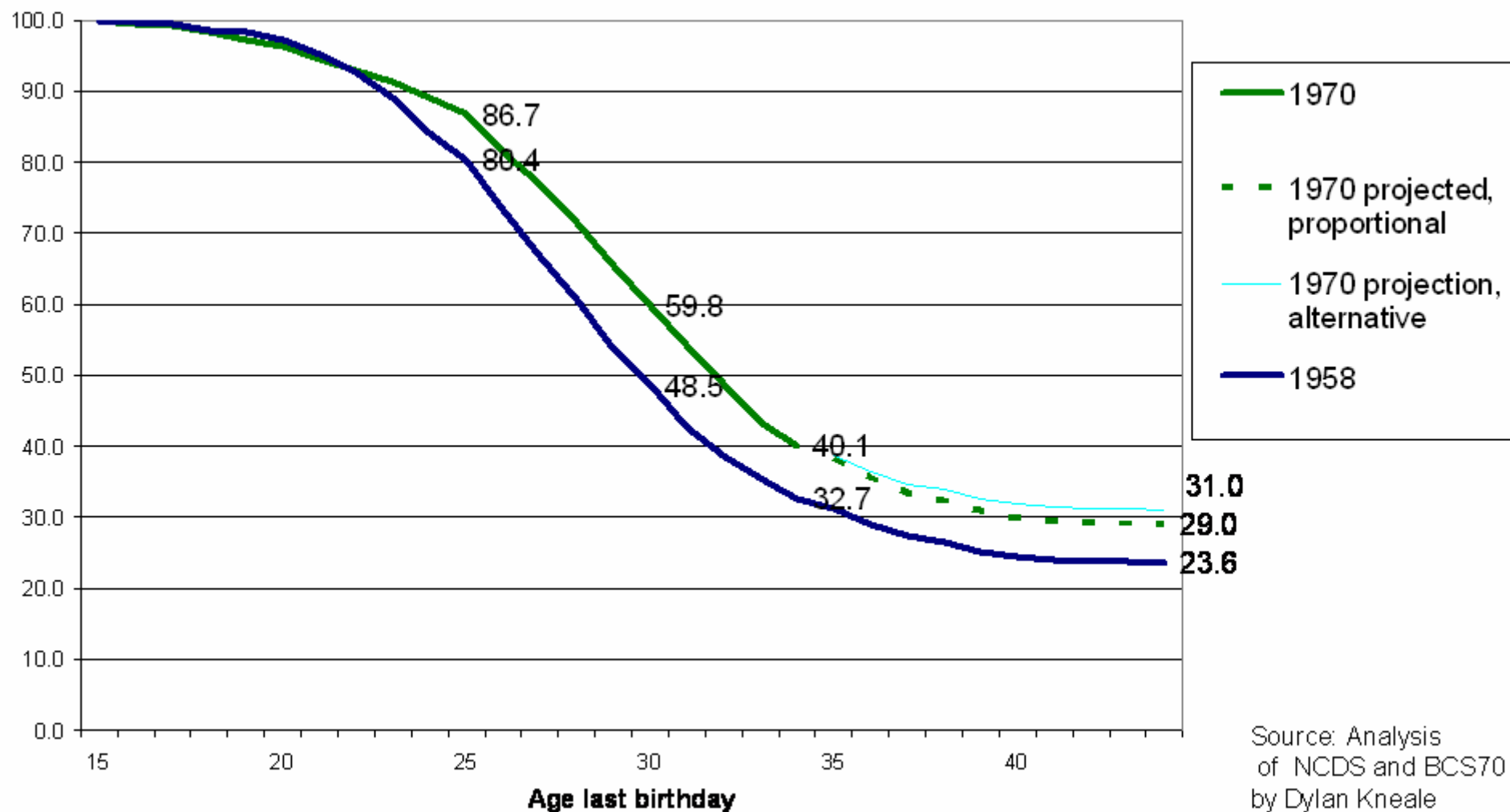
Graduates 1970 33

Graduates 1958 31

Non Graduates 1970 26

Graduates = highest qualification = NVQ 4 or 5 , tertiary by age 30 in 1970 cohort

## Percentage of Graduate Women Childless born in 1958 to 1970, GB

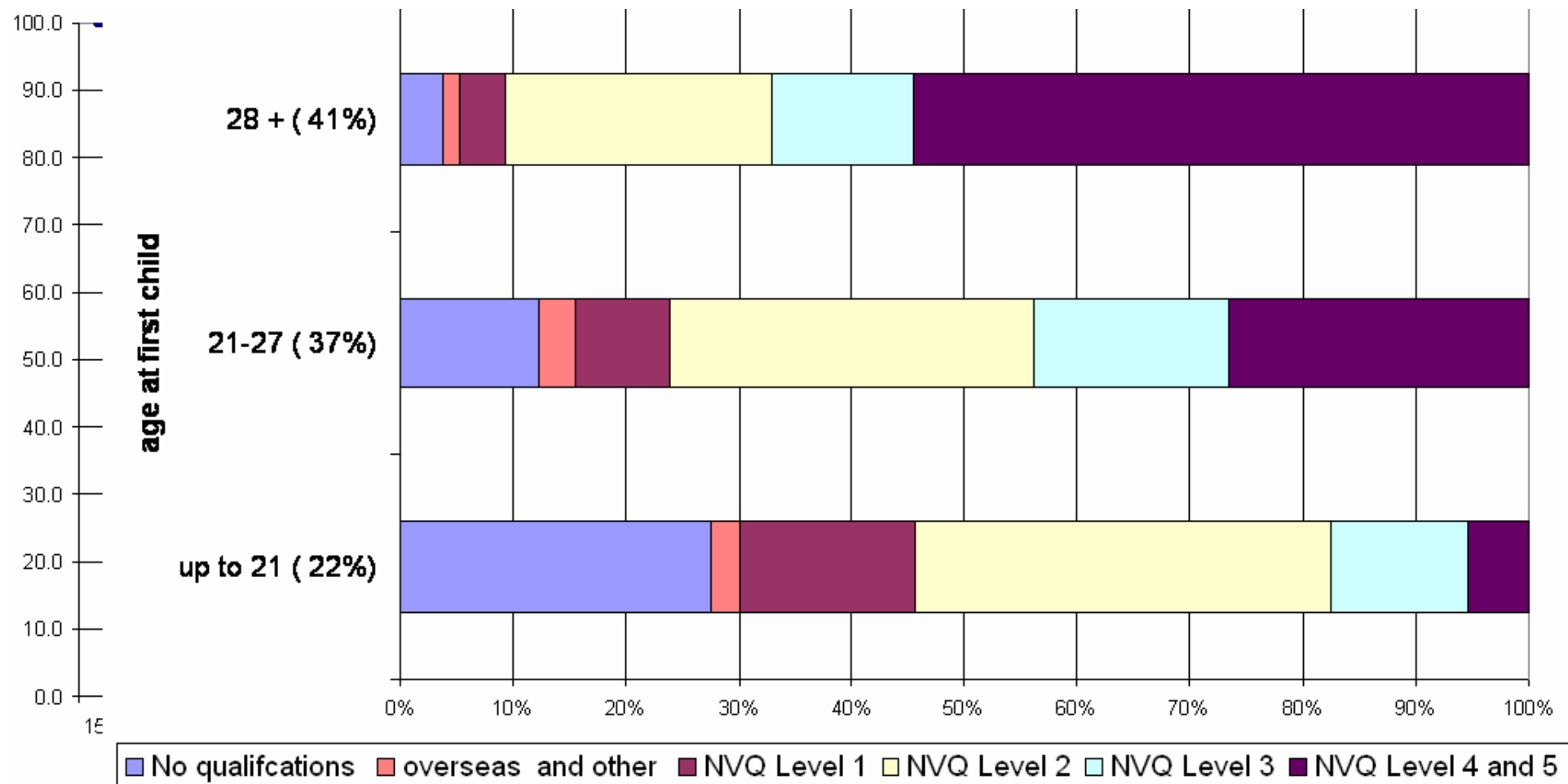




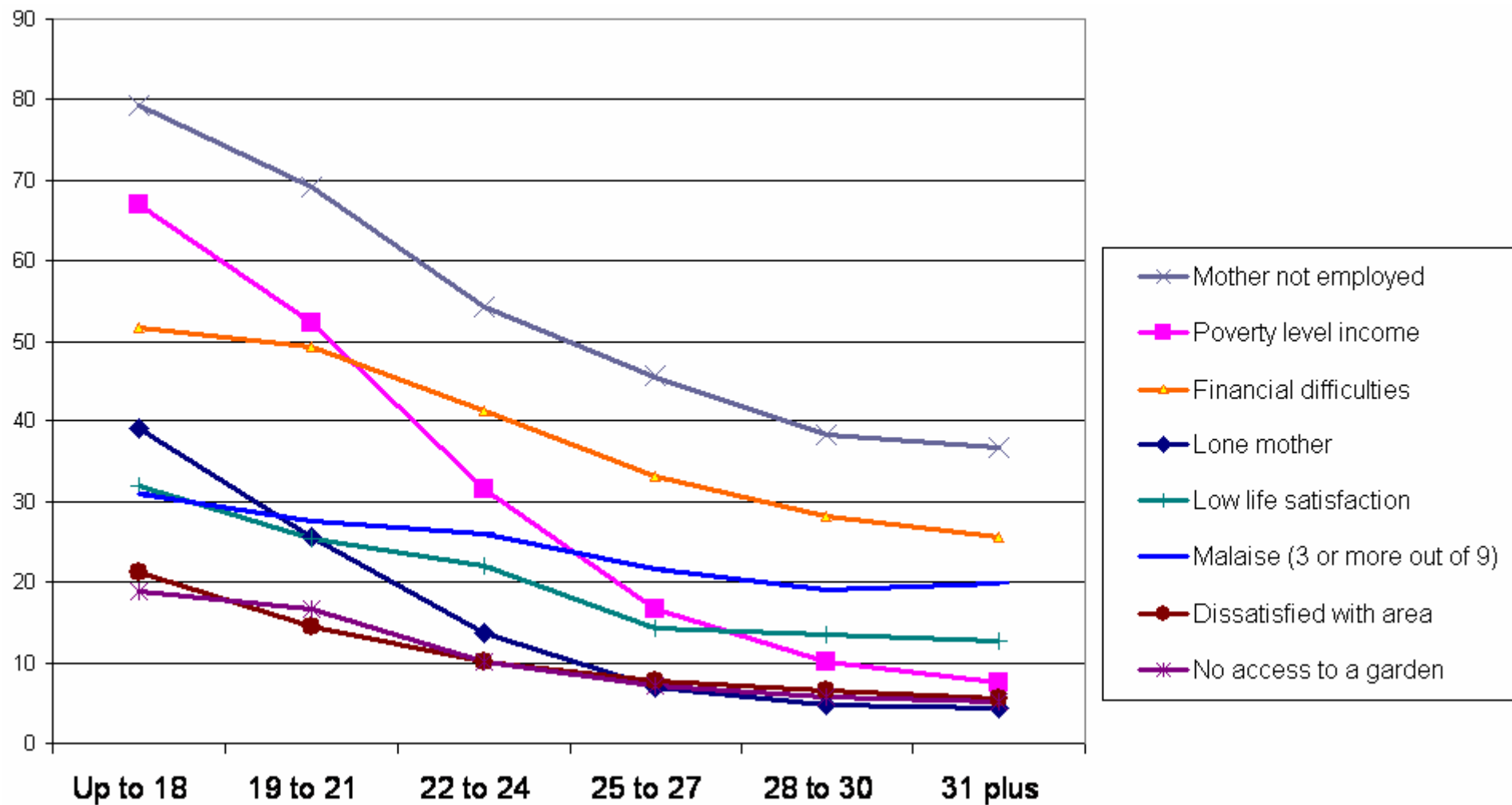
# Postponement

- Later probably means less?  
in terms of number
- Does later mean less  
in terms of 'quality'
- Does postponement entail more resources to meet the costs, more mature parents, better matched?

## Educational attainment of Millennium Cohort mothers by age at first child



## Selected indicators of living standards at MCS1 (2001-2) by age at motherhood



## Is there a payoff to postponement?

- Parents starting later are able to invest more in current and future family life. Big contrast up to age 30, not much thereafter.
- Early mothers have pre-existing disadvantages which may be compounded especially in the partnership market ( see Ermisch and Pevalin).
- Does this mean encouraging delay or discouraging very early childbearing?
- Relationships are complex, age at childbearing not a policy lever.
- Public investment in rearing children once born can both complement parental resources and compensate for the lack of them.



## Public policy and parental employment

- Female employment opportunities have not totally deterred motherhood.
- Along with considerations in the partnership market they have led to 'later and less', often with part-time employment as a compromise between family and career. Gender equity suggests need to continue to improve the terms on which motherhood and careers may be combined.
- Efficiency and equity arguments also point to the needs of those parents with less potential to develop their own careers and their children's health and education.
- The MCS follow up will show that they are still vulnerable.



**Following lives from birth and through the adult years.**

The Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS) is an ESRC Resource Centre based at the Institute of Education. The Centre houses three internationally-renowned birth cohort studies: the 1958 National Child Development Study, the 1970 British Cohort Study and the Millennium Cohort Study. **More about CLS.**

News

**14/09/2006 CLS sets up a new working group for the 2008 fieldwork for NCDS and BCS70**

CLS has set up a new working group to discuss measures of cognition and personality in the next round of NCDS and BCS70 fieldwork.

Events

**17/10/06 1958 National Child Development Study (NCDS) and 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70): a workshop for potential users.**

On Tuesday 17 October CLS will be holding a one-day introductory workshop on the 1958 National Child Development Study (NCDS) and the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70).

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